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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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Nurse gets death row in Yemen, MEA says will help

NEW DELHI, 31 DEC

India on Tuesday said it is extending all possible help in the case of an Indian nurse facing death sentence in Yemen. Nimisha Priya from Kollengode in Kerala's Palakkad district has been reportedly handed capital punishment for allegedly murdering a Yemeni. Priya was handed capital punishment by a trial court in 2020 and Yemen's Supreme Judicial Council upheld the verdict in November 2023. Yemen's President Rashad al-Alimi approved it. *—PTI*

Man held with Rs 2.5 cr drugs meant for NY events

BENGALURU, 31 DEC

A man has been arrested for allegedly storing drugs worth Rs 2.50 crore, meant for distribution during the new year celebrations in Bengaluru. The arrest was made on 27 December based on a tip-off. The items seized in an apartment in Chokkanahalli here include hydro ganja, marijuana, LSD strips: 40 units, MDMA crystal and three weighing machines, two mobile phones and Rs 21.30 lakh cash. The accomplice is absconding. *—PTI*

Dallewal ready for medical aid if Centre talks

NEW DELHI, 31 DEC

The Punjab government on Tuesday informed the Supreme Court that farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who has been on an indefinite fast for over a month, has agreed for medical aid given the Central government accepted his proposal to hold talks. A vacation bench of Justices Surya Kant and Sudhanshu Dhulia took note of Punjab government's plea seeking three more days to comply with SC's 20 December order. *—PTI*

PPF, NSC interest rates stay same

Interest rates for all small savings schemes will stay the same for Jan-Mar

NEW DELHI, 31 DEC

The government on Tuesday left the interest rates unchanged on various small savings schemes, including PPF and NSC, for the fourth straight quarter beginning 1 January, 2025.

"The rates of interest on various small savings schemes for the fourth quarter of FY 2024-25, starting from 1 January, 2025, and ending on 31 March, 2025, shall remain unchanged from those notified for the third quarter (1 October, 2024, to 31 December, 2024) of FY 2024-25," said a finance ministry notification.

As per the notification, deposits under the Sukanya Samriddhi scheme will attract an interest rate of 8.2 per cent, while the rate on a three-year term deposit remains at 7.1 per cent prevailing in the current quarter.

The interest rates for popular Public Provident Fund (PPF) and post office savings deposit schemes too have been retained at 7.1 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively.

The interest rate on the Kisan Vikas Patra will be 7.5 per cent, and the investments will mature in 115 months.

The interest rate on the National Savings Certificate (NSC) will remain at 7.7 per cent for the January-March 2025 period.

Like the current quarter, the Monthly Income Scheme will earn 7.4 per cent for investors.

The interest rates have been left unchanged for the last four quarters now. The government had last made changes in some schemes for the fourth quarter of the last fiscal. The government notifies the interest rates on small savings schemes, majorly operated by post offices and banks, every quarter. *—PTI*

- The interest rates for PPF and post office savings deposit schemes too have been retained at 7.1 per cent and 4 per cent respectively

PHOTO: PIXABAY

PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

SUN SETS ON 2024

People pose for a photograph during the last sunset of the year 2024, at Lal Bagh in Bengaluru on Tuesday

China hacks, steals from US Treasury

WASHINGTON, 31 DEC

Chinese hackers remotely accessed several US Treasury Department workstations and unclassified documents after compromising a third-party software service provider, the agency said Monday.

The department did not provide details on how many workstations had been accessed or what sort of documents the hackers may have obtained. The hack was being investigated as a "major cybersecurity incident," it added.

In Beijing, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning gave China's standard response: "China consistently opposes all forms of hacking, and we are even more opposed to the dissemination of false information against China for political purposes."

The incident comes as US officials are continuing to grapple with the fallout of a massive Chinese cyberespionage campaign known as Salt Typhoon that gave officials in Beijing access to phone conversations of Americans. *—PTI*

Manipur CM apologises for ethnic conflict

IMPHAL, 31 DEC

Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Tuesday apologised for the ethnic conflict in the state which claimed over 250 lives and rendered thousands homeless.

Addressing reporters here, Singh said that there has been relative peace in the state in the last three-four months, which gives him hope that normalcy will be restored in the new year.

"I want to say sorry for what happened in the state. Many people lost their loved ones and many had to leave their homes. I regret and want to apologise... Whatever happened has happened... I want to appeal to all communities to forgive and forget our past mistakes and start life afresh by living together in a peaceful and prosperous Manipur," he said.

"From May to October, 2023, 408 firing incidents were reported. From November 2023 to April 2024, there were 345 firing incidents, whereas from May this year till now, 112 firing incidents were reported," he said.

More than 250 have been killed in violence between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kuki-Zo groups since May last year. *—PTI*

VAISHALI IN BLITZ FINALS QUALIFIER

NEW YORK, 31 DEC

Indian Grandmaster R Vaishali won the women's qualifier to advance to the quarterfinals of the World Blitz Championship here.

Following Koneru Humpy's stellar performance, which earned her the gold medal and a prize of USD 60,000, it was Vaishali's turn to impress. She triumphed in the women's section, scoring 9.5 points, with three draws on her way to a 9.5/11 performance.

Russian Kateryna Lagno came closest, scoring 8.5 points, while the remaining six qualifiers finished with 8 points. Despite meeting the points, Humpy was eliminated due to the worst tiebreaker, finishing ninth. Ten players tied for first place, including world number one Magnus Carlsen. Carlsen scored when needed and drew six of his 13 games, finishing among the co-leaders at the end. *—PTI*

TRYST WITH SPACE

ISRO all set to perform docking exercise

SRIHARIKOTA, 31 DEC

Two spacecraft that would aid Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in demonstrating space docking, a critical technology for future space missions, separated successfully and were placed into the desired orbit late on Monday, the space agency said.

This also marked a first for the industry, which built the two spacecraft on their own under guidance from ISRO engineers.

"PSLV C60 Spadex mission is accomplished with respect to Spadex A and B satellites," said Mission Director M Jayakumar. The rocket has placed the satellites in the circular orbit after over 15 minutes of flight, ISRO Chief S Somanath said. "And we hope that the docking process can happen in another week... approximately 7 January," he said.

In this mission, the very important part is the POEM-4 with 24 payloads from start-ups, industries, academia and also from ISRO centres, he said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

RECAP 2024

AS WE STEP INTO THE NEW YEAR, SALAR NEWS HELPS YOU RECALL WHAT A BITTERSWEET YEAR 2024 WAS.

RG KAR RAPE SENDS SHOCKWAVES

India was left shook by the rape and murder of an on-duty doctor at Kolkata's RG Kar Hospital on 9 Aug. While initially suspected to be a gangrape, Sandeep Roy, a civic volunteer, was arrested. Protests erupted nationwide. Kolkata doctors went on strike demanding justice and safety. High Court criticised the police and transferred the case to CBI. During a 'Reclaim the Night' protest, miscreants vandalised the crime scene. Supreme Court criticised the Bengal govt and formed a panel to review safety for doctors. RG Kar Principal Sandeep Ghosh was arrested for money laundering.

FINALLY, A RAM MANDIR IN AYODHYA

31 years after the Babri Masjid was demolished, PM Modi inaugurated the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya on 22 Jan. While celebrities and politicians made a beeline, the top four Shankaracharyas - heads of Hindu mutts - boycotted, citing deviations from Sanatan Dharma and an incomplete temple. The Ram Lalla statue was sculpted in black stone by Mysuru's Yogiraj.

THE ELECTION THAT SURPRISED INDIA

India went to polls from 19 April to 1 June. BJP won 250 seats, falling short of 271 majority. Nitish Kumar, who broke away from INDIA bloc & returned to NDA, and Chandrababu Naidu's TDP helped BJP form govt. Oppn saw arrests of Arvind Kejriwal & Hemant Soren while Cong bagged 99 seats — its best since 2014. J&K voted for the 1st time since abrogation of Article 370, with NC and Cong winning on 8 Oct, and Omar Abdullah as CM. In a clean sweep, Congress beat BJP-JD(S) alliance to win Channapatna, Shiggaon and Sandur bypolls on 23 November.

400 DEAD IN WAYANAD LANDSLIDE

On 30 July, landslides devastated the picturesque hills of Chooralmala and Mundakkai in Wayanad, killing at least 400. The landslides were triggered by 146mm of rains in a single day. It is one of Kerala's deadliest disasters, with 118 people missing as of 24 Dec.

BYE-BYE ELECTORAL BONDS

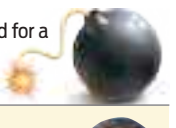
On 15 Feb, SC struck down Electoral Bonds as unconstitutional. It ordered EC & SBI to disclose data by 6 March. EC published it by 13 March. The data revealed quid pro quo donations, with firms donating to parties before receiving projects. BJP received Rs 6,060 crore, with Future Gaming and Hotel Services donating Rs 1,365 crore.

INDIA LOSES ITS GEM MANMOHAN SINGH

Ex-PM Manmohan Singh, the architect of India's economic reforms, died on 26 Dec. He was one of the longest-serving (2004 to 2014) and only Sikh PM. India also lost industrialist Ratan Tata, CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury, Tabla maestro Zakir Hussain, & Ameen Sayani.

BOMB HOAXES SEND INDIA INTO A TIZZY

India faced a surge in hoax bomb threats targeting airports, schools, colleges and hotels. Airlines received 999 bomb threats, costing Rs 3 cr per hoax to each plane that was threatened. Khalistani terrorist Gurpatwant Pannun threatened to blow up AI plane in Nov. A Nagpur man was held for a few hoaxes, while students used threats to avoid exams. Cops struggle to trace culprits due to use of VPNs, unknown servers.



INDIA TO HAVE SIMULTANEOUS POLLS?

On 3 March, a panel led by Ram Nath Kovind submitted its recommendations for 1 Nation, 1 Election, which the Cabinet approved. The proposal aims to synchronise polls across the country ensuring simultaneous elections for Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. The Bill failed to gain majority support & was sent to a Joint Parliamentary Panel.

CURTAINS DOWN ON BRITISH-ERA LAWS

On 1 July, India overhauled its criminal justice system with Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita & Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, replacing colonial-era criminal bills. Oppn dubbed these "draconian". These introduced community service for petty offences and use of electronic records as proof. It also redefined terrorism & abolished sedition.

UPROAR OVER WAQF BILL

Centre introduced Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, in LS on 8 Aug, to repeal Mussalman Wakf Act, 1923, and amend Waqf Act, 1995. This includes removing govt properties from Waqf status. The bill allows non-Muslims on Waqf Boards. A JPC was formed to review it. Farmers in Karnataka's Vijayapura got a notice on 4 Oct claiming 1,500 acres of land as Waqf, prompting protests.

T20 WORLD CUP WIN HEALS INDIA

After the heartbreak of losing ODI World Cup to Australia in 2023, India rejoiced as the men in blue defeated South Africa by 7 runs to win T20 World Cup after 17 years on 29 June. India won every match. Under coach Rahul Dravid, Rohit Sharma was the second-highest run-scorer, while Arshdeep Singh and Jasprit Bumrah were top wicket-takers.

CHECKMATE: GUKESH KING AT 18

Dommaraju Gukesh made history by becoming the youngest-ever World Chess Champion at just 18 years of age. He defeated reigning champion China's Ding Liren. Gukesh surpassed the record set by Russian legend Garry Kasparov, who won the title at 22 in 1985.

EE SALA CUP NAMDE

Royal Challengers Bangalore's 16-year-long IPL trophy drought ended with the team beating Delhi Capitals in 2024 Women's Premier League on 17 March at Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi.

Roller coaster year for K'taka

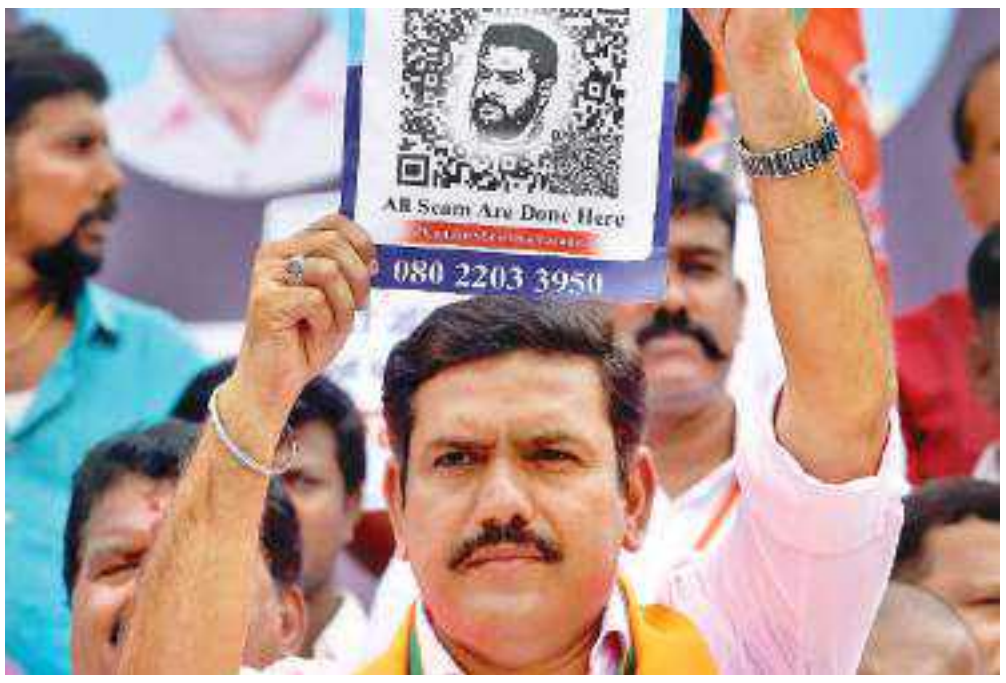
MP Prajwal Revanna's arrest in a sex scandal, scams & a bomb blast rocked the State

ED, LOKAYUKTA AT CM'S DOOR OVER MUDA SCAM

CM Siddaramaiah is facing prosecution over alleged irregularities in land allocations by the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA). The controversy centres on the allocation of compensatory land parcels to his wife, BM Parvathi, during his previous term. BJP accused him and his govt of a land scam, calling for his resignation.

Activists TJ Abraham, Pradeep Kumar and Snehamayi Krishna claim the allotment of 14 premium sites in Mysuru to Parvathi as compensation for acquired land was unlawful, causing a loss of Rs 45 crore to the treasury. The disputed land, a 3.16-acre parcel in Kesare, was transferred to Siddaramaiah's brother-in-law, Mallikarjuna Swamy Devaraj, in 2005. Activists allege that Mallikarjuna illegally acquired the land in 2004 with forged documents, despite it being recorded as purchased in 1998.

In 2014, Parvathi applied for compensation under 50:50 scheme, which grants 50% developed land to those who lose undeveloped acquired land. Following petitions from activists, Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot approved CM's prosecution by Lokayukta. ED has also filed a case against CM.



VALMIKI SCAM HAUNTS CONGRESS GOVT, MINISTER QUITS

Sri Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation fraud scam came to light after the suicide of 52-year-old corporation superintendent Chandrasekaran on 19 May, who left a note alleging Rs 85 crore fraud. The scandal revealed large-scale misappropriation of funds meant for Valmiki community's welfare as Rs 8.8 crore out of Rs 18.7 crore for 2024-25 projects was transferred to an unauthorised account at Union Bank of India. On 26 February, Rs 88 crore was moved from the corporation's account with forged signatures. The SIT probe prompted BJP to demand Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's resignation. After an ED probe, Minister B Nagendra was arrested on 12 July for embezzling funds. He resigned later. On 14 Oct, a court granted him bail.

PRAJWAL IN JAIL AFTER 2,000 SEX VIDEOS OUT

Just days before the 26 April Lok Sabha elections, pen drives containing over 2,000 videos allegedly showing Hassan MP and JD(S) leader Prajwal Revanna forcing women into sexual acts were released. The women, including officials, allegedly approached him for help, and he raped and recorded the acts. The day after the elections, Prajwal fled to Germany using a diplomatic passport. His father, HD Revanna, was arrested in an abduction case. After being expelled from JD(S) on 30 April, Prajwal returned on 31 May and was arrested by SIT. Former PM HD Deve Gowda claimed the cases against his son were fabricated, while HD Kumaraswamy accused Congress leader DK Shivakumar of orchestrating the scandal.

DROUGHT CRIPPLES STATE

Karnataka faced its worst drought in 30 years, affecting over 200 taluks and leaving many farmers in distress, with 46.11 lakh hectares of crops lost. The State received less than 31% of the Southwest and Northeast monsoons, leading to severe water shortages. Estimated losses exceeded Rs 30,000 crore, and the State sought Rs 17,500 crore from the Centre. Only Rs 5,200 crore was approved. On 23 March, the State filed a petition in the Supreme Court over delays in fund release.

CITY SEES WATER CRISIS LIKE NEVER BEFORE

Bengaluru faced its harshest summer in decades, with temperatures reaching 39°C and over 140 rainless days from Feb to May, leading to severe water scarcity. KRS and Kabini reservoirs were almost dry, forcing residents to rely on private tankers, which were charging over Rs 1,000, prompting the State to cap rates. Experts blamed the crisis on rapid urbanisation. In a 1st, Bengaluru also turned to using treated wastewater in industries and for constructions.

BLAST AT RAMESHWARAM CAFÉ SHOCKS BENGALURU

A low-intensity IED exploded at Rameshwaram Cafe in Brookfield on 1 March, injuring nine people. Authorities suspect the attack may be linked to competition jealousy after the cafe secured the prestigious catering contract for Anant Ambani's pre-wedding ceremony. CCTV footage surfaced showing a suspect entering with a bag. A case under UAPA and the Explosive Substances Act was registered in Bengaluru, and three days later NIA took over. NIA offered a Rs 10 lakh reward and released a suspect's photo. Two suspects, Mussavir Hussain Shazib and Abdul Taha Mateen, were arrested in Kolkata.

THE TEMPLE BILL FIASCO

Assembly passed the Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowment (Amendment) Bill, allowing the government to collect 10% of income from temples earning over Rs 1 crore. The bill proposes a Common Pool Fund for temple amenities, insurance and scholarships for priests' children. Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot returned the Bill, questioning if similar legislation for other religious bodies exists. The bill sparked controversy, with the BJP accusing CM Siddaramaiah's government of "anti-Hindu" policies.

DARSHAN'S FALL FROM ACTOR TO MURDERER

Renukaswamy, a Chitradurga resident, was allegedly kidnapped, tortured and murdered by men linked to Kannada actor Darshan Thogudeepa on 7 June. His body was found near a drain in Summanahalli in Bengaluru on 9 June. The motive was reportedly revenge for lewd messages sent to Darshan's alleged girlfriend, Pavithra Gowda. Autopsy revealed Renukaswamy's testicles were ruptured and one of his ears was missing. Darshan, Gowda and 16 others were arrested on 11 June and were released on bail on 13 Dec.

PAKISTAN SLOGAN ROW

After Congress MP Naseer Hussain's Rajya Sabha victory on 27 Feb, BJP leaders alleged "Pakistan Zindabad" slogans were raised by Congress workers in the Assembly. BJP IT cell head Amit Malviya, Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar, and Karnataka leader CT Ravi shared a video with this claim, calling Cong anti-India. Hussain denied the allegations. The suspect, Mohammad Shafiq Nashipudi, was detained and later released. The slogan turned out to be "Naseer Saab Zindabad". The audio was reportedly tweaked using AI.

IN A 1ST, NANDINI SPONSORS T20 WORLD CUP

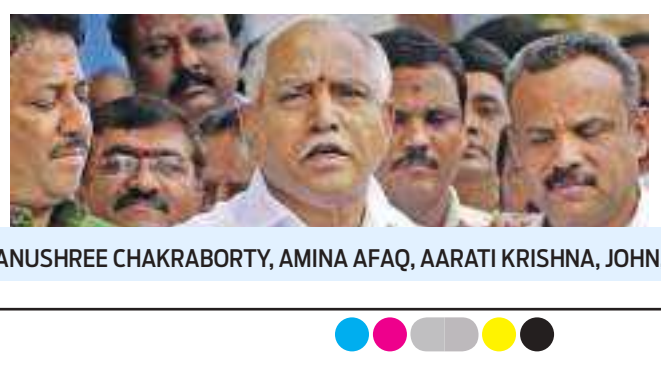
For the first time, State-owned dairy brand Nandini sponsored a sports match for Scotland and Ireland during the T20 World Cup in the United States, with its logo featured on players' T-shirts. KMF, which had previously sponsored Bengaluru Bulls in the Pro Kabaddi League, announced plans to launch whey-based drinks during the World Cup. Nandini also opened its first branch outside Karnataka in Delhi on 21 November.

CITY WOMAN CHOPPED INTO 30 PIECES

On 21 Sept, the body of a 29-year-old woman chopped into more than 30 pieces and stuffed in a refrigerator, was found in Malleswaram. Mahalakshmi used to live in a one-bedroom apartment and was separated from her husband. Her husband alleged an extramarital affair. On 26 Sept, the suspect was found dead in Odisha in suspected suicide.

BSY BOOKED AGAIN BUT THIS TIME ON POCSO CHARGES

Trouble knocked on ex-CM BS Yediyurappa's door again on 16 March, after he was booked under the POCSO Act for allegedly sexually assaulting a minor at his Bengaluru residence on 2 February. The 17-year-old's mother had taken her daughter to Yediyurappa's residence to seek justice in another rape case and request his help in forming a Special Investigation Team (SIT), when he allegedly assaulted her. The mother died in May due to breathing issues. The case is now in the High Court.

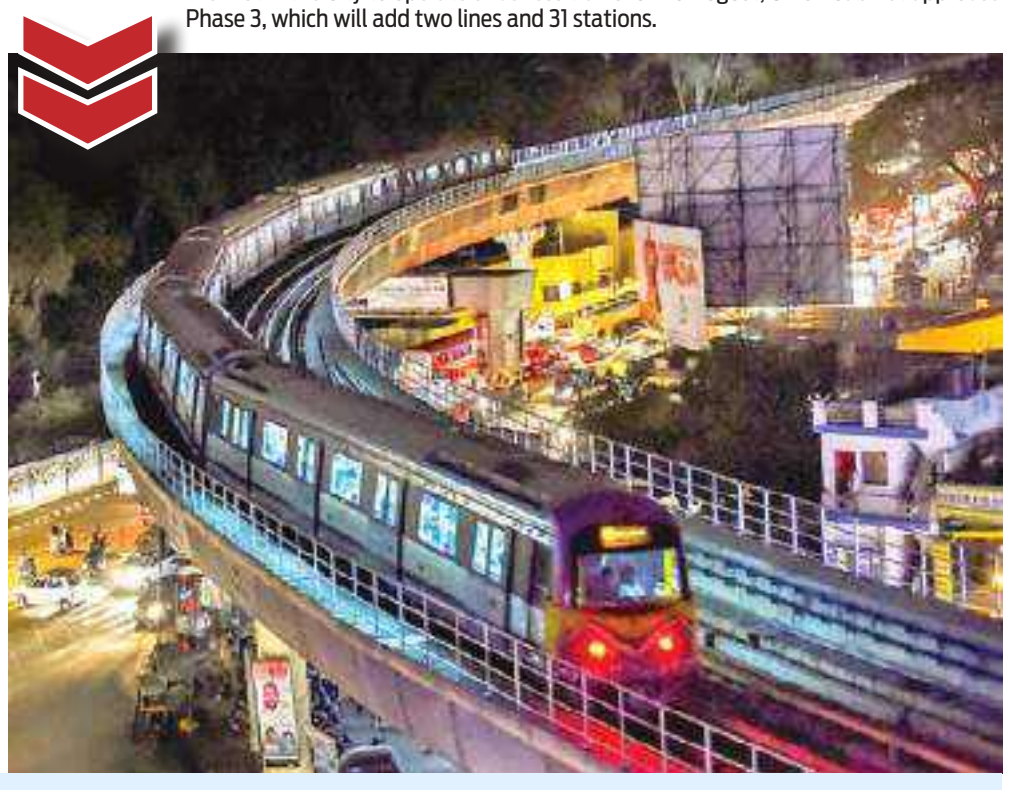


GOODBYE SM KRISHNA

Ex-CM SM Krishna died at 92 on 10 Dec. Krishna was honoured with Padma Vibhushan, in recognition of his six-decade-long contributions to politics including. He played a key role in making Bengaluru the IT hub of India. He was also an EAM, Guv, DyCM, Speaker.

METRO BREAKS RECORDS

On 14 August, Namma Metro set a new ridership record with 9,17,365 passengers, surpassing the previous high of 8,65,000 set on 6 August, 2024, less than 10 days earlier. BMRCL received the first set of six train coaches for the under-construction Yellow Line. The 18.8 km Yellow Line, connecting RV Road and Bommasandra, will be the first in the City to operate driverless trains. On 16 August, Union Cabinet approved Phase 3, which will add two lines and 31 stations.



RESEARCH: ASMA, ANUSHREE CHAKRABORTY, AMINA AFAQ, AARATI KRISHNA, JOHN, SUBHALAKSHMI PR, PRIYANKA SAHARIA, HAMEED ASHRAF, PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD, DESIGN: G VISHWANATHA

CHAOS, CHANGE & CHALLENGES

A deep dive into soft diplomacy, policies, challenges and triumphs that shaped the country

TRADE TROUBLES: B'DESH, CHINA & US STIR THE POT

US President-elect Donald Trump criticised India's high tariffs on US goods, threatening reciprocal tariffs. India and Canada downplayed tensions over the murder of Sikh leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar, maintaining trade. Relations with China were affected by border disputes and stricter regulations on imports, investments, and mobile apps following the 2020 Galwan clash. In October, Bangladesh imposed a hilsa export ban on India for the first time to prioritise domestic supply and manage the declining hilsa population. Despite increasing imports, India's exports fell, widening the trade deficit with China to $49.4 billion in H1 FY25, highlighting challenges in balancing geopolitical and economic interests.

INDIAN DIPLOMACY'S TIGHT ROPEWALK

In 2024, India navigated a turbulent diplomatic landscape, with both improvements and deteriorations in its foreign relations. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's diplomatic efforts included visits to Russia and Ukraine in July, where he urged both sides to resolve their conflict through dialogue. Modi also attended BRICS summit in Russia in October.

Relations with Bangladesh soured after India granted asylum to Sheikh Hasina. Tensions rose further with increased attacks on Hindus and the arrest of ISKCON monk Chinmoy Krishna Das. Khalistan issue created a rift with Canada after Ottawa accused India of involvement in the assassination of Hardeep Singh Nijjar. Canada expelled Indian diplomats, prompting India to retaliate.

The US also accused India of plotting the assassination of Sikh separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, with former RAW official Vikash Yadav named as accused.

FUEL WOES, BNS LAWS SPARK NATIONWIDE TRUCKERS' STRIKE

In January, truckers across India protested against Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), which introduced 10-year jail or Rs 7 lakh fine in hit-and-run cases. Before BNS, the punishment was for up to 10 years. Truckers also protested against rising fuel prices and tolls.

FARMERS' FURY CONTINUES: TRACTORS, TEAR GAS & TRAGEDY

Farmers' protest began on 13 February, with farmers in Punjab and Haryana demanding legal assurance for Minimum Support Price (MSP) and full loan waivers. Centred at Punjab's Shambhu border, protests saw five deaths. Thousands of farmers marched toward Delhi with tractors, prompting police to seal borders and impose Section 144. Tear gas, rubber bullets, and drones were used by authorities.

NEET DRAMA: LEAKS, ARRESTS & PERFECT SCORES

The 2024 NEET-UG and UGC NET exams were marred with paper leaks and reports of candidates paying 30–50 lakh, leading to 13 arrests. Protests erupted after results announced on 4 June, coinciding with Lok Sabha poll results, saw 67 perfect scores, prompting the Supreme Court to cancel compensatory marks granted to 1,563 students. UGC NET exams were cancelled and later rescheduled.

HEMA REPORT ROCKS MOLLYWOOD

Hema Committee, formed by Kerala government in 2017 after an actress was sexually assaulted, investigated sexual violence in Malayalam film industry. Chaired by Justice Hema, with actress Sharada and IAS officer KB Vatsalakumari, the committee submitted a 300-page report in December 2019, revealing harassment allegations against biggies Ranjith Balakrishnan, Siddique and CPI (M) MLA Mukesh. AMMA, the top decision-making body in the industry, dissolved itself and actor Mohanlal stepped down as panel president. Mukesh was arrested and later released. Siddique too was arrested and later got bail. Actor Nivin Pauly was also accused of rape but was later cleared of all charges.

CAA OFFICIALLY NOTIFIED: BIG BUZZ, FEW TAKERS IN ASSAM

In March, Centre officially notified Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024, marking a key milestone in India's citizenship policy. It grants citizenship to persecuted minorities from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. It facilitates citizenship for Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians fleeing religious persecution in neighbouring Muslim-majority countries before 21 December, 2014. However, only eight applications were reportedly filed under CAA in Assam in four months.

FROM DEATH ROW TO FREEDOM: 8 NAVY VETERANS RETURN FROM QATAR

Eight Indian Navy veterans, on death row in Qatar for alleged spying, were released after 18 months on 12 February. Seven of them returned to India. They were arrested in October 2022 for spying on a submarine programme. In December, the death sentence was commuted as PM Narendra Modi met Qatar Amir.

TRAIN TRACKS SABOTAGED

Trains faced fresh trouble this year with miscreants going the extra mile to block railway tracks. September saw multiple sabotage attempts where people kept iron rods, rocks, boulders, and even gas cylinders on tracks. At least 24 such incidents were reported in the country.

SACRED CONFLICT: TEMPLES VS MOSQUES

India witnessed a surge in legal petitions claiming that mosques were built on Hindu temple sites, sparking disputes. In Varanasi, a court allowed Hindus to pray at Gyanvapi Mosque. In May 2022, now retired Chief Justice DY Chandrachud said Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act (PWA) of 1991 doesn't bar determining the religious character of a place of worship. In 2024, he upheld an order to do pooja at Gyanvapi. In Sambhal, a court ordered survey of Shahi Jama Masjid that led to clashes, killing 4. Seven cases were filed against 2,500, including Sambhal MP Zia ur Rahman Barq. Mathura too saw claims of Shahi Idgah Mosque being built on Lord Krishna's birthplace. 800-year-old Ajmer Dargah, shrine dedicated to saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, saw a local court allowing a survey after Hindus claimed existence of a Shiva temple beneath the Dargah.

HATHRAS HORROR: 121 KILLED IN STAMPEDE

121 people died in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras district at a prayer meeting for Hindu Guru Bhole Baba on 2 July. Devotees rushed to touch the Baba's feet as he was leaving, leading to the stampede. 2,50,000 people had gathered at the venue. Police booked the organisers for culpable homicide but excluded the preacher. Bhole Baba remains elusive.

HUNT FOR BEEF STILL ON

2024 yet again saw Hindutva groups on a spree to catch alleged cow smugglers. They went a step further and barged into people's homes to check their refrigerators for beef. People, mostly minorities, were lynched yet again. Even a Class 12 student, Aryan Mishra, was shot dead by cow vigilantes in Faridabad. In Madhya Pradesh, homes of 11 were bulldozed for allegedly storing beef. Odisha and Rajasthan even saw curfews.

NATURE'S FURY SNUFFS OUT LIVES

India faced extreme weather for 255 days in 2024. Floods, landslides and cyclones such as Remal and Fengal caused 3,238 deaths - 18% rise from 2022. Vijayawada saw devastating floods in September, killing 35. Intense heatwaves killed 210, and cold wave in December saw mercury fall to minus 8°C in Srinagar after 1974.

AURORA MAGIC REACHES LEH | A spectacular display of auroras lit up the skies over Leh, as a severe geomagnetic storm struck Earth on 10 October. Aurora borealis was seen worldwide in places such as New York City, Texas, London and southern France.

SPICY WORRY: NATIONS BAN MDH & EVEREST

Indian spice brands MDH and Everest were in soup as Singapore, Hong Kong and Nepal banned their spices over contamination with ethylene oxide, a toxic chemical. However, India continues to buy their spices.

SC CRUSHES 'BULLDOZER JUSTICE' PRACTICES

Many state governments such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand yet again took to bulldozers to raze properties of accused in various crime and allegedly even minorities. However, for the first time, Supreme Court on 13 November put the brakes on 'bulldozer justice' declaring it unconstitutional. It mandated a 15-day notice and clear documentation of violations.

STATES' DEFINING MOMENTS

From India's longest bridge to introducing UCC, *Salar News* recalls most happening events

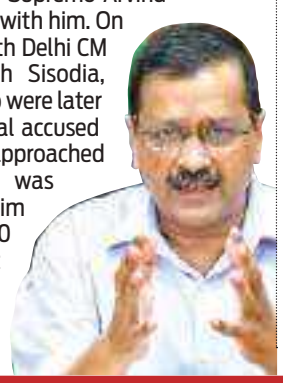
DELHI

SMOGGED IN: CAPITAL BREATHES IN FUMES

Delhi has long struggled with poor air quality, which worsens as winter sets in. This year, things took a drastic turn after the city violated firecracker ban on 31 October. The aftermath was a thick layer of smog, with air quality index soaring to 400, even reaching 1,000 — well above the safe threshold of 50 — making Delhi the most polluted city. As the crisis continued in Nov and amid government inaction, SC intervened, enforcing GRAP 4 measures, which included restricting vehicle movement and shutting schools.

KEJRI JOINS SISODIA, SATYENDAR IN TIHAR

For years, the liquor policy haunted AAP Supremo Arvind Kejriwal, but in 2024, it finally caught up with him. On 21 March, ahead of LS polls, ED arrested th Delhi CM and sent him to Tihar where Manish Sisodia, Satyendar Jain, and Sanjay Singh (the trio were later granted bail by SC) were lodged. Kejriwal accused BJP of using the ED to silence him. He approached trial and High Court for bail but was unsuccessful. However, SC granted him interim bail for LS poll campaign from 10 May to 1 June, 2024. He refused to quit and ran the govt from jail. On 17 Sept, just 4 days after his bail, Kejriwal resigned as CM. Atishi replaced him as the CM.



DELHI AIRPORT ROOF COMES TUMBLING DOWN

On 28 June, a cab driver was killed when the roof at Terminal 1 of Indira Gandhi International Airport collapsed due to heavy rain. The incident sparked criticism, with many pointing out that the terminal had been renovated for Rs 12,000 crore and was inaugurated by PM Modi in March.

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

NO END TO TERROR ATTACKS AND COFFINS IN J&K

After the LS polls, J&K saw a surge in terror attacks, with 44 deaths reported, including 18 security personnel and 13 militants. On 9 June, LeT militants attacked a Hindu pilgrims' bus, killing 9. Other attacks followed in July, September, and October (this month saw 7 attacks in two weeks that left 13 dead), including an attack in Ganderbal killing 6 migrant workers and a doctor on 20 Oct. Reports blame Centre's lack of "actionable human intelligence" and the withdrawal of army companies from Jammu for deployment in Ladakh for the attacks.

HIMACHAL

WHO ATE SUKHU'S SAMOSA?

In one of the year's most bizarre incidents, 5 cops in Himachal were slapped with showcause notices and a CID probe after samosas and cakes meant for CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu ended up on the wrong plates in October. The CID probe labelled the mishap as "anti-government". Oppn BJP MLAs mocked the government by ordering 11 samosas for Sukhu and having them delivered to his residence.

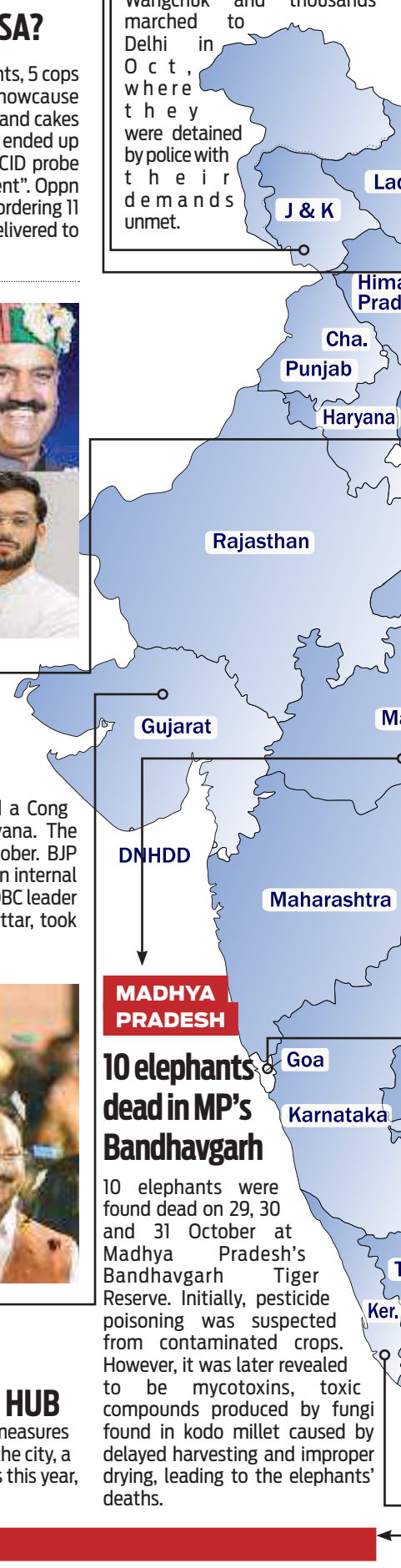
CONG ON THE BRINK OF COLLAPSE AFTER 6 MLAs CROSS VOTE

Congress govt in Himachal faced a crisis after 6 MLAs and 3 Independents cross-voted in the 27 February RS poll, allowing BJP's Harsh Mahajan to win the lone seat. Despite holding 43 of 68 Assembly seats, Congress's numbers dropped to 33 after the expulsion of six MLAs and the resignation of three, who joined BJP on 23 March. BJP was accused of using money to lure MLAs. The crisis deepened amid rumours of more MLAs defecting to BJP, due to tiff with CM Sukhu. The turmoil ended with Sukhu's apology.

LADAKH

AT 11,500FT, WANGCHUK'S 'CLIMATE FAST' TO SAVE LADAKH

Climate activist and engineer Sonam Wangchuk went on a 21-day hunger strike in March to protect Ladakh, joined by 250 protesters braving sub-zero temperatures at 11,500ft. He demanded statehood for Ladakh post-Article 370 abrogation and protections for its fragile ecosystem. After being ignored, Wangchuk and thousands marched to Delhi in Oct, where they were detained by police with their demands unmet.



GUJARAT

RAJKOT GAMING ZONE FIRE KILLS 35

On 25 May, a fire at a gaming zone in Rajkot, Gujarat, claimed the lives of 35 people, including 12 children. The fire engulfed the multi-storey structure housing the gaming zone, which was crowded due to a discounted ticket scheme. The park was operating without proper licences and had not obtained a fire clearance no-objection certificate. The fire is believed to have been caused by an electrical short circuit, which spread rapidly due to the presence of flammable materials in the arcade. The owner of the amusement park and its manager were arrested.

VADODARA GETS INDIA'S 1ST PRIVATE MILITARY JET PLANT

On 28 October , India's first private military aircraft manufacturing facility was inaugurated in Vadodara. The Tata Aircraft Complex, a joint venture between Tata Advanced Systems Ltd and Airbus Spain, will produce 40 C-295 military transport aircraft, with 16 units supplied from Spain. The first aircraft is expected by September 2026, with all 40 units delivered by August 2031, as part of the 'Make in India' programme.

HARYANA

BJP'S HAT-TRICK IN HARYANA LEAVES CONGRESS IN DISARRAY

Defying anti-incumbency and exit polls that predicted a Cong victory, BJP achieved a historic hat-trick win in Haryana. The polling were held on 5 October, with results on 8 October. BJP bagged 48 out of 90 seats. Congress, which was mired in internal strife, won 37 seats. Nayab Singh Saini, the 54-year-old OBC leader appointed as CM in March to replace Manohar Lal Khattar, took oath as the new Haryana CM on 17 October.

MADHYA PRADESH

10 elephants dead in MP's Bandhavgarh

10 elephants were found dead on 29, 30 and 31 October at Madhya Pradesh's Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve. Initially, pesticide poisoning was suspected from contaminated crops. However, it was later revealed to be mycotoxins, toxic compounds produced by fungi found in kodo millet caused by delayed harvesting and improper drying, leading to the elephants' deaths.

RAJASTHAN

KOTA CONTINUES TO BE THE SUICIDE HUB

Despite coaching centres in Kota implementing various measures like installing spring fans and netting around balconies, the city, a hub for NEET and JEE preparation, witnessed 20 suicides this year, according to the government data.

MAHARASHTRA

Pawar vs Pawar battle heats up

While last year saw Nationalist Congress Party split into factions led by Ajit Pawar and his uncle Sharad Pawar, this year saw success in various fronts for the former group that joined ruling BJP. On 6 February, Election Commission awarded the party name and symbol to the Ajit Pawar faction and on 5 March, Maharashtra Assembly Speaker declared them as "real" NCP. Adding joy to the faction led by the Deputy Chief Minister, they defeated the NCP (SP) in 29 seats in Maharashtra Assembly elections.

Siddique shot dead, Bishnoi spreads fear

Actor Salman Khan, who has been a target of Lawrence Bishnoi gang, faced a security scare as two men on a bike opened fire outside his residence in Mumbai on 14 April. The security of the actor was increased, but he got multiple death threats. On 12 October, Baba Siddique, an NCP (Ajit Pawar) leader and known for hosting iftar parties, was shot dead, and a gang led by Lawrence Bishnoi claimed responsibility.

Engineering marvel Atal Setu develops cracks in 6 months

Inaugurated on 12 January by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the 22-km-long Mumbai Trans Harbour Link, improved connectivity between the state's two largest cities, Mumbai and Navi Mumbai. It is the longest sea bridge in India and the world's 12th longest sea bridge. Despite taking six years for constructing the Rs 17,840 crore project, Atal Setu Nhava Sheva Sea Link was said to be engineered for a 100-year lifespan, incorporating advanced Japanese technology. But cracks appeared on an approach road to the bridge within six months of its opening, raising questions on the construction quality.

Winds bring down hoarding, 17 killed

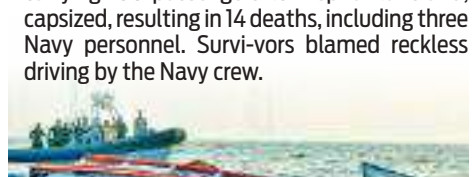
At least 17 people were killed and 74 injured after a huge iron hoarding collapsed on a petrol pump at Ghatkopar in Mumbai on 13 May during a dust storm. Bhavesh Bhinde, director of an advertising firm that had installed the hoarding, was arrested. He opposed the arrest saying the high velocity of the wind that led to the hoarding collapse was an "act of God" and was not in his control.

Luxury car crashes hog the limelight

Vedant Agarwal, 17, who was driving an unregistered Porsche under the influence of alcohol, knocked over two bikers in Pune on 19 May, 2024. When Juvenile Justice Board gave the son of a real-estate businessman bail after asking him to write an essay, it created a nationwide furore. Vedant's father and grandfather were arrested for kidnapping their family driver and his mother was arrested for swapping the blood samples with hers. In another case, Mihir Shah, 24, son of a Shiv Sena politician, was arrested after he rammed his BMW into a two-wheeler, leading to the death of a 45-year-old woman on 7 July 2024.

14 dead in Mumbai ferry crash

On 18 Dec, a boat accident occurred off Mumbai's coast when a Navy speedboat collided with passenger ferry. The fer-ry, carrying 100 passengers to Elephanta Island, capsized, resulting in 14 deaths, including three Navy personnel. Survi-vors blamed reckless driving by the Navy crew.



EY worker's death awakens firms

The death of 26-year-old Ernst & Young employee Anna Sebastian Perayil from cardiac arrest on 20 July ignited a nationwide debate on work stress and mental health in corporate environments. In a letter to EY's India head, Perayil's parents revealed she endured grueling seven-day weeks, working 14-hour days. Her tragic passing has prompted Big Four accounting firms to implement more employee-friendly measures.

UTTARAKHAND

BJP DELIVERS UCC PROMISE

Uttarakhand became the first state post-Independence to adopt a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) for all citizens, excluding Scheduled Tribes. This fulfilled a longstanding promise by BJP. Key provisions include: mandatory marriage registration within six months, registration and parental consent for live-in couples, outlawing triple talaq, a restriction on divorce within the first year of marriage, and equal property rights for spouses, children, and parents.

HALDWANI ON THE BOIL: CLASHES AFTER MADRASA DEMOLITION KILLS 6

Clashes erupted in Haldwani dist, Uttarakhand, on 8 Feb following the demolition of the Abdul Razzaq Zakariya Madrasa and the Mariyam Mosque at Malik Ka Bagicha by the municipal corporation. Violence broke out as Muslims protested the demolition, while Hindus celebrated, chanting "Jai Shri Ram", leading to clashes. Police opened fire, resulting in six deaths and 100 injuries. Authorities imposed an internet shutdown, closed schools, and issued shoot-at-sight orders against rioters.

BIHAR

46 DROWN DURING RITUALS IN BIHAR

On 26 September, 46 people, including 37 children, drowned in flood-swollen rivers across Bihar during the Jivitputrika festivities. Jivitputrika is a Hindu festival where women fast for 24 hours and pray for their children's wellbeing, culminating in a ritual bath in a water body.

CHHATTISGARH

31 NAXALS GUNNED DOWN

In the largest operations against Maoists in Chhattisgarh, forces killed 31 Naxalites in Bastar on 4 October. This was five months after 29 Naxalites, including top cadres, were killed by security forces in Kanker. This year, 237 Naxalites have been killed, 812 arrested, and 723 have surrendered in Chhattisgarh. In a separate incident in December, seven Naxalites were killed in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district.

4L TREES CUT DOWN IN HASDEO, TRIBALS PROTEST AGAINST ADANI

On 7 January, thousands of people protested in the Hasdeo-Aranya forests of Chhattisgarh against the Adani Group's coal mining operations, which led to the felling of 4 lakh trees. The Hasdeo forest spanning over 170,000 hectares is home to many tribal communities. The expansion of mining has led to the displacement of tribal communities, loss of access to forest resources, and a threat to their cultural heritage. Local communities have voiced strong concerns about the destructive impact of the Parsa coal block project, which has already resulted in the destruction of significant forest areas. They argue that their rights, especially those under the Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas Act, which protects tribal land rights, are being overlooked in favour of corporate interests.

NAGALAND

30 SOLDIERS GET RELIEF IN 2021 CIVILIAN KILLINGS

In September, the Supreme Court closed criminal proceedings against 30 Indian Army personnel accused of killing 13 civilians during a military operation in Nagaland in 2021. On 4 December, 2021, the soldiers opened fire on a pick-up van carrying coal miners from Tiru to Oting village in Mon district. Six workers on board were killed after the soldiers allegedly mistook them for insurgents. In retaliation the local residents set fire to Army vehicles. In response, the soldiers opened fire again, resulting in the deaths of seven more civilians. The top court stated that if the Centre grants sanction for their prosecution, criminal proceedings will be revived.

WEST BENGAL

RAPES, RAID AND RIOTS: SANDESHKHALI SCANDAL

The Sandeshkhali scandal in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas revolved around TMC leader Shahjahan Sheikh, among others accused of rape, land grabbing, and corruption. Tensions escalated when his associates allegedly attacked ED officials. Protests erupted against raids throught out the state. In the LS polls, BJP fielded Rekha Patra, one of Sheikh's accusers, for the Basirhat seat, but she lost.

TRIPURA

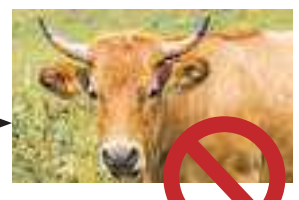
PEACE ACCORD ENDS 35-YEAR CONFLICT

Marking an end to 35-year-long conflict, Central and Tripura governments, two major insurgent groups —National Liberation Front of Tripura and All Tripura Tiger Force - signed a peace agreement on 4 September, to end violence in the state. With Centre allotting Rs 250 cr, the agreement is aimed at fostering a safer environment for development, integration of former insurgents into mainstream society, smooth implementation of a development package for tribals and preserving cultural heritage of Northeast tribal groups.

MANIPUR

STILL IN TURMOIL

The violence between the Kuki and Meitei communities, which began in May 2023, continued into 2024. On 7 Sept, a gunfight in Jiribam between the two groups resulted in six deaths. Although the Meitei and Hmar communities reached an agreement on 1 August, violence erupted again in Jiribam in Nov after the bodies of three people were found. Protesters attacked lawmakers' residences, including that of the Chief Minister, in Imphal. In response, Manipur requested the Centre to withdraw AFSPA. On 17 Nov, the NPP withdrew its support from the ruling alliance.



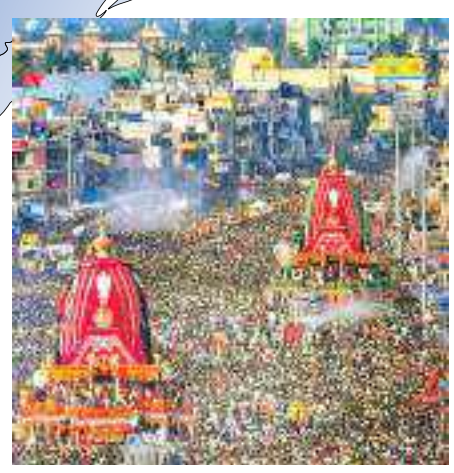
ASSAM

ASSAM BANS BEEF; FACES BACKLASH

On 5 December, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced a complete ban on the consumption of beef in restaurants, hotels, and public places. The Opposition called it a violation of the "right to freedom". The move followed allegations that Congress distributed beef to gain electoral support in Samaguri, a Muslim-majority constituency. Sarma also faced backlash from within his own party, with Kerala BJP leader Major Ravi condemning the decision for potentially creating communal tensions.

ODISHA

2 DEAD IN RATH YATRA



Two devotees lost their lives, and nearly 130 others sustained injuries in two separate incidents during the Jagannath Rath Yatra in July. One of the victims reportedly died from suffocation in a stampede-like situation during the yatra. In a separate incident, a devotee was allegedly crushed to death after being caught under the wheels of a moving chariot. 600 people sought medical attention at hospitals during the yatra, with health facilities witnessing a surge in cases of dehydration, injuries, and exhaustion amid the crowded processions.

GOA

'IS GOA WORTH THE HYPE?'

Goa, a haven for party lovers from across the globe, was on the receiving end on social media after a tourist who visited the coastal destination said all, from hotels to cabs, are fleecing tourists. "The beaches are dirty and stuffed with tourists. I don't see why anyone would still visit Goa," X user Aditya Trivedi wrote. Adding to this, a CEIC Data report stated that foreign tourism in the state has failed to recover to pre-Covid levels.

ANDHRA PRADESH

WHEN GODS ARE NOT SPARED

Tirupati Temple, one of the wealthiest temples in the world, was embroiled in controversy this year. Andhra Pradesh CM Chandrababu Naidu alleged that animal fat had been used in the preparation of sacred laddus (prasadam) during the tenure of the previous YSRCP government. On 30 September, the Supreme Court ruled that there was no conclusive evidence to support claims of animal fat adulteration during the YSRCP's administration.

FACTORY BLAST CLAIMS 18 LIVES

An explosion at an Escientia Advanced Sciences pharmaceutical manufacturing facility in Atchutapuram Special Economic Zone in Visakhapatnam on 21 August killed at least 18 people and injured 50 more. The blast occurred when workers at the factory tried to stop the leak of a solvent MTBE (Methy Tertiary Butyl Ether), according to State Home Minister V Anitha.

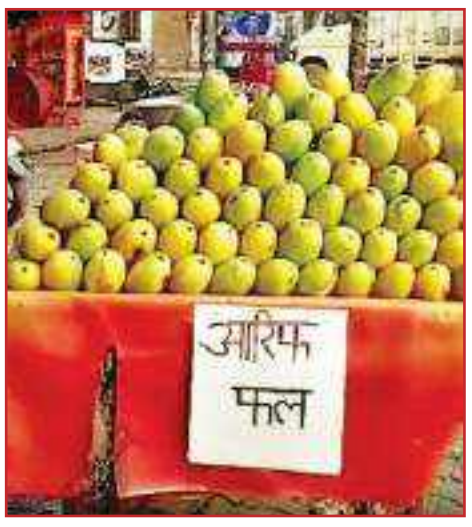
UTTAR PRADESH

TROUBLE IN PARADISE AS MAURYA EYES YOGI'S OUSTER

After BJP's poor performance in the Lok Sabha elections, winning only 36 of 80 seats, internal rifts emerged. Deputy CM Keshav Prasad Maurya criticised CM Yogi Adityanath, stating, "The organisation is bigger than the government." Maurya and other OBC, SC, and ST leaders alleged their concerns were ignored and that quota jobs were being outsourced to upper castes. Their meeting with BJP leaders in Delhi sparked speculation of a Cabinet reshuffle and efforts to limit Yogi's power.

17 NEWBORNS KILLED AS FIRE ENGULFS JHANSI HOSPITAL

On 15 November, 17 newborns died as a fire broke out in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) of Maharani Laxmi Bai Medical College in Jhansi. While 44 infants were rescued. The fire was reportedly caused by a short circuit due to electrical overloading. The government hospital faced criticism for lacking proper safety measures, with allegations of using expired fire extinguishers and inadequate electrical safety protocols. NICU was overcrowded, housing 55 infants despite a capacity of 18 beds.



NAMEPLATE CONTROVERSY ON KANWAR YATRA ROUTE

On 19 July, Uttar Pradesh ordered that hotels, restaurants, eateries, and roadsidecarts along the Kanwar Yatra route display the owners' names. Uttarakhand followed with a similar directive. The governments also announced action against those selling Halal-certified products. The Supreme Court later stayed the order, calling it discriminatory.

TELANGANA

PHONE TAPPING CREATES POLITICAL STORM

Former deputy commissioner of police P Radhakishan Rao's confession that BRS government under K Chandrashekar Rao used police machinery to monitor phone conversations of Opposition parties raised political temperature in Telangana. DSP of Special Intelligence Bureau Praneeth Rao was arrested and it was alleged that the intelligence team extorted money from businessmen and eradicated all traces of their illicit activities, including digital and physical evidence.

TAMIL NADU

HOOCH TRAGEDY AGAIN, 65 PEOPLE DIE

Over 65 people died and more than 200 were injured after consuming illegally made liquor in Kallakurichi district of Tamil Nadu on 20 June. The victims were dailywage labourers and loaders, hailing from socially and economically disadvantaged groups. The tragedy brought to the fore inadequate policies and ineffectiveness of authorities in Tamil Nadu in curbing the sale of hooch.

AIR SHOW RESULTS IN CHAOS

Five spectators died and more than 200 were hospitalised during an Indian Air Force (IAF) held in Chennai on 6 October. Held at Marina Beach to celebrate the 92nd anniversary of IAF, the air show was from 11am to 1pm with many spectators standing in the scorching heat for hours. It was chaos all around as thousands of people struggled with overcrowding, traffic jams and lack of basic amenities.

KERALA

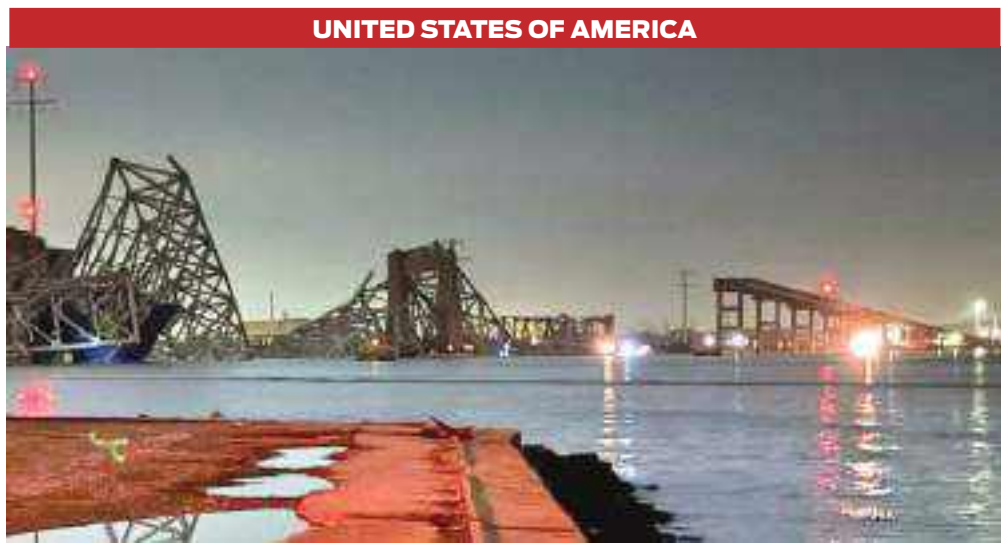
5 DIE IN TEMPLE FIRE BLAST

Five people died in a fireworks accident at Anjoottanbalam Veererkavu temple in Kasaragod district, Kerala on 28 October. Three people, including two temple committee members, were arrested under Explosive Substances Act and sections of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Kasaragod district superintendent of police D Shilpa said the temple officials had failed to adhere to safety protocols and had not obtained necessary permissions for the fireworks display.

EVENTS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD

2024 saw more climate chaos, crime thrillers, political upheavals, and wars that just refuse to end

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



BALTIMORE BRIDGE COLLAPSE CRIPPLES TRADE

On 26 March, the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore, caused by a crash involving the Singapore-registered MV Dali, triggered an $81 billion trade crisis, disrupting vital shipping operations. The vessel, manned by an all-Indian crew, collided with a support pillar after a power failure led to a loss of steering. Six construction workers on the bridge tragically died. The rebuilding is projected to cost between $1.7 billion to $1.9 billion, with completion expected by 2028.

HERO OR MURDERER?

Luigi Mangione, a former Ivy League student, was arrested on 9 Dec for the murder of Brian Thompson, the CEO of UnitedHealthcare who was shot dead. Mangione pled not guilty. Incidentally, he became a social media hero.

UK

ROYALS BATTLE CANCER

In February, King Charles III and in March, Catherine, Princess of Wales, was diagnosed with cancer. Charles began treatment after prostate surgery, while the Princess underwent chemotherapy. Charles and Queen Camilla visited Bengaluru in October as part of a wellness treatment. The visit marked his first trip to India since his coronation in May.

SPAIN

WORST FLOODING IN 50 YEARS HITS VALENCIA; 231 KILLED

In late October, Spain experienced its most severe flooding in half a century, primarily affecting the eastern regions, notably Valencia. The disaster resulted in at least 231 fatalities, with several individuals still missing. The floods inflicted extensive damage on infrastructure, homes, and businesses, with estimated losses amounting to approximately $3.8 billion.

SWEDEN

SWEDEN GETS INTO THE NATO CLUB

As the final Nordic country to join the alliance, Sweden officially joins NATO, becoming its 32nd member after Finland a year earlier. The decision to seek NATO membership was primarily driven by heightened security concerns following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

FRANCE

GISELE PELICOT RAPE CASE ROCKS FRANCE

72-year-old Gisèle Pelicot challenged the status quo when she accused her husband and at least 83 others of raping her from 2011 to 2020. She came out in the open and accused her husband Dominique Pelicot of drugging her and inviting men to rape her while recording the acts. 51 men were found guilty. Police found 20,000 incriminating images and videos. She was unaware of the violations until till 2020, when Dominique was arrested for unrelated voyeuristic activities.

ECUADOR

EMERGENCY AFTER NOTORIOUS MAFIA MAN ESCAPES PRISON

On 8 Jan, Ecuador's President Daniel Noboa declared a state of emergency after drug cartel leader José Adolfo Macías escaped prison. The military was deployed, and a nighttime curfew was set, sparking 30 violent incidents. He remains at large.

MEXICO

SHEINBAUM MAKES HISTORY AS 1ST FEMALE PRESIDENT

Claudia Sheinbaum made history as Mexico's first female president, taking office on 1 October. Sheinbaum, an environmental scientist and former mayor of Mexico City, secured her victory in 2 June General Election, obtaining approximately 58% of the votes.

CONGO

COUP ATTEMPT IN CONGO FAILS

On 19 May, a coup attempt in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, reportedly led by Christian Malanga, targeted President Tshisekedi and Economy Minister Kamerhe. After heavy fighting, Malanga, founder of the United Congolese Party, was killed, and calm was restored.

CONGO

MPOX OUTBREAK

Just 5 years after Covid, Mpox triggered fears of another pandemic. Mpox first broke out in Democratic Republic of the Congo and led to 29,000 cases and 800 fatalities worldwide. On 14 August, World Health Organization declared it a public health emergency.

UAE

UNUSUAL RAINS CLAIM 32 LIVES

On 16 April, heavy rainfall in the UAE caused flash floods that killed 32 people and disrupted Emirates Airlines at Dubai International Airport. The floods damaged infrastructure and homes, while air travel was severely affected with numerous flight cancellations, delays, and diversions, impacting thousands of passengers.

HAITI

GANG WARS KILL THOUSANDS

On 3 March, Haiti declared an emergency after gangs stormed two prisons, demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Ariel Henry. Armed gangs freed 4,700 inmates, marking a new low in Haiti's violence. Police, undermanned with only 9,000 officers, were overwhelmed. Over 12 people were killed, and gangs attacked airport, police stations, government offices. Subsequent violence lead to deaths of at least 3,600 people. This year saw 5,80,000 people being displaced from the country.

SOUTH AFRICA

A NEW ERA IN SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICS

In the South African General Elections, the African National Congress (ANC) failed to secure a parliamentary majority for the first time since the end of apartheid. ANC lead by President Cyril Ramaphosa garnered 40% of the vote, a significant decline from previous elections.

SLOVAKIA

ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION OF PM

On 15 May, Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico was shot multiple times during a public event in Handlová by Juraj Cintula, 71, who was immediately arrested. After multiple surgeries, Fico was discharged on 30 May. Cintula shot Fico out of rage over his policies and the government's stance against military assistance to Ukraine.

SAUDI ARABIA

HAJJ TRAGEDY: EXTREME HEAT CLAIMS 1,300 LIVES IN MECCA

During the Hajj pilgrimage in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, extreme heat resulted in the deaths of over 1,300 pilgrims. Temperatures soared to approximately 51.8°C, leading to widespread heat-related illnesses among the 1.8 million pilgrims. Among deceased were, 660 Egyptians, 165 Indonesians, and 98 Indians.

ETHIOPIA

DEADLY LANDSLIDE

On 22 July, a landslide in Geze Gofa, Ethiopia, killed at least 257 people, making it Ethiopia's deadliest landslide. The UN warned the final death toll could exceed 500.

YEAR OF ELECTIONS

UNITED KINGDOM

The United Kingdom's General Election on 4 July resulted in a decisive victory for the Labour Party, led by Keir Starmer, ending 14 years of Conservative Party rule. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's handling of inflation, public sector strikes and cost-of-living pressures were major points of contention. Public trust in the Conservative Party eroded due to scandals and leadership instability following Boris Johnson and Liz Truss's controversial tenures.

NAMIBIA

Namibia elected its first female President, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, from the ruling SWAPO party, in the 27 November polls. However, the elections were marred by technical issues like shortage of ballot papers, which resulted in a three-day extension of the voting period. Opposition parties questioned the legality of this extension.

SRI LANKA

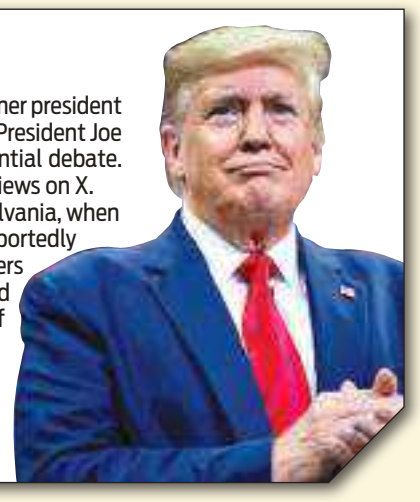
Sri Lanka held its presidential election on 21 September, which saw Anura Kumara Dissanayake, a Marxist lawmaker from the National People's Power emerging victorious. In the parliamentary elections on 15 November, Dissanayake's coalition, Jathika Jana Balawegaya, achieved a landslide victory, securing 159 out of 225 seats. His campaign centered on addressing poverty and economic inequality, resonating with voters seeking change amid the economic challenges.

PAKISTAN

Pakistan's General Elections on 8 February faced allegations of massive rigging, with delayed vote counting and social media dubbing it the "generals' elections". Key PTI leaders, including former PM Imran Khan, were jailed, while the Election Commission of Pakistan and Supreme Court banned PTI's symbol, forcing candidates to run as independents. Pakistan Muslim League-N formed coalition govt under PM Shehbaz Sharif. PTI alleged rigging, sparking protests. 6 were killed, 1,000 detained.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

On 5 Nov, the US elected its 47th president, with Republican candidate and former president Donald Trump defeating Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris. Incumbent President Joe Biden, initially running for re-election, dropped out after a disastrous Presidential debate. Billionaire Elon Musk funded the Republican campaign and promoted MAGA views on X. On 13 July, Trump survived an assassination attempt at a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, when he was shot in the ear by 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks. The attack reportedly boosted Trump's popularity among voters. However, Trump's victory sent jitters down the spines of world leaders. He threatened big tariffs on India, China and Canada among others. He also vowed to end the Russia-Ukraine war on day 1 of office. Musk and Indian-American Vivek Ramaswamy were made heads of DOGE—Department of Government Efficiency, which will cut state funding massivley. Indians ruled the roost with Indian-American Kash Patel becoming FBI Director and Chennai-born venture capitalist Sriram Krishnan tapped as White House policy adviser on artificial intelligence (AI).



CHINA

CHINA SPREADS ITS WINGS, THREATENS TAIWAN AND PHILIPPINES WITH DRILLS

Decades-long tensions between Taiwan and China worsened after Lai Ching-te's swearing-in as Taiwan's president on 20 May, leading China to conduct military drills around Taiwan, calling them a "strong punishment" for "separatist acts". For the first time, these drills simulated a full-scale attack. The US approved $567 million in defence support for Taiwan in September. On 9 Dec, China's warships and jets surrounded Taiwan in its third drill of the year. Meanwhile, China intensified its military presence to intimidate the Philippines, especially around the South China Sea, using water cannons to block Philippine ships and conducting retaliatory drills.

TAIWAN

TAIWAN ELECTS PRESIDENT

The recent Taiwanese presidential election saw Lai Ching-te, the candidate from the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), secure victory with 40% of the vote. The election took place amid rising tensions with China, which claims Taiwan as part of its territory.

JAPAN

7.5 QUAKE HITS JAPAN

On 1 Jan, a 7.5 magnitude earthquake struck Japan's Noto, killing 462 and injuring 1,344.

AFGHANISTAN

MEDICAL TRAINING BANNED FOR WOMEN

On 3 Dec, Taliban banned medical training for women in Afghan especially midwives and nurses. This endangers women's lives, as male medics can't treat women without a male guardian. The ban affects around 35,000 women in training. Earlier, Taliban also banned woman praying out loud & school education.

IRAN AND PAK

IRAN ATTACKS PAK WITH MISSILES

On 16 Jan 2024, Iran launched missile on Pakistan, targeting separatists in Balochistan, claiming retaliation for the Kerman bombings. Pakistan condemned the attack as a violation of airspace, reporting two children killed. On 18 Jan, Pakistan retaliated with missile strikes in Iran, targeting Balochistan separatists in Sistan and Baluchestan, killing nine. These were the first foreign airstrikes on Iranian soil since 1988. Diplomatic talks on 19 Jan led to de-escalation, with both countries agreeing to cooperate.

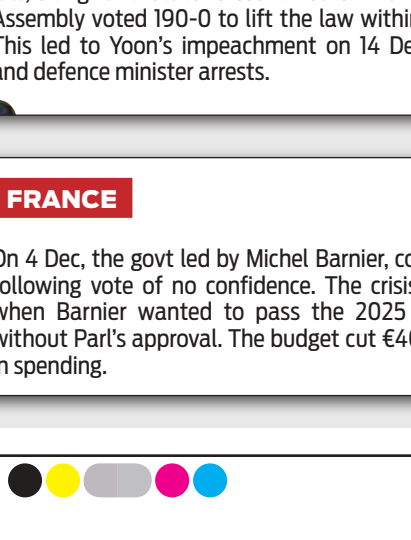
THAILAND

THAILAND GETS 2 PMs IN A YEAR

Following the Constitutional Court's dismissal of Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin on 14 August for appointing a cabinet minister with prior prison sentence, Thailand's political leadership shifted. Paetongtarn Shinawatra, a prominent figure and daughter of former PM Thaksin Shinawatra, succeeded him. Her leadership may signal a return to the political policies associated with her family's legacy.

AUSTRALIA

ASSANGE TASTES FREEDOM AFTER 14 YRS



WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange finally got his freedom back, ending his 14-year-long fight to avoid extradition to the US to face prosecution. He pled guilty to one count of violating the US Espionage Act for publishing classified US military documents, including details of Iraq operations, as part of a plea deal. Arrested in the UK in 2010, Assange sought asylum in Ecuador in 2012. In 2019, asylum was revoked and he was arrested. The US wanted him extradited, but a UK judge blocked it in 2021 due to his poor mental health.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

LANDSLIDE BURIES VILLAGES, AT LEAST 670 KILLED

On 24 May, 2024, a landslide struck the village of Yambali in Enga Province, Papua New Guinea with 100 reported fatalities. UN later estimated more than 670 deaths, while locals said that over 2,000 individuals were buried under the debris.

NORTH & SOUTH KOREA

POOP BALLOONS & MISSILES INTENSIFY ANIMOSITY

- **5 JAN:** North fires 200 missiles near two South islands
- **16 JAN:** North's leader Kim Jong Un declares South as the "primary foe"
- **19 JAN:** North tests under water nuclear weapon in Japan Sea
- **29 MAY:** North send 260 balloons carrying garbage and human waste to South
- **4 JUNE:** South suspends the 2018 peace treaty
- **6 JUNE:** South drops 2,00,000 anti-Pyongyang leaflets, and USB sticks with K-pop songs and dramas on North with 10 balloons
- **19 JUNE:** Putin visits Pyongyang for 1st time since 2000
- **9 NOV:** South accuses North of jamming GPS signals disrupting ships, flights

WORLD WATCHED WARS LIVE

ISRAEL SINKS DEEPER INTO GAZA, IRAN & LEBANON PULLED IN

The world watched as Israel's assault on Gaza intensified with bombings in Rafah. The death toll touched 45,000. The war spread to Lebanon and Iran, fuelling fears of a Middle East conflict with ceasefire talks faltering. Here is what happened:

- **26 JAN:** S Africa drags Israel to UN I'ntl Court of Justice over genocide in Gaza. No halt to assault ordered
- **29 FEB:** Isreal soldiers open fire on civilians in Gaza, killing a hundred
- **25 MARCH:** UNSC passes 1st resolution calling for Gaza ceasefire
- **13 APRIL:** Iran launches 300 missiles against Israel in 1st direct attack
- **19 APRIL:** Israel hits back at Iran
- **10 MAY:** UNGA grants Assembly seat to Palestine
- **24 MAY:** ICJ rules that Israel must halt its military offensive in Rafah
- **28 MAY:** Spain, Ireland and Norway recognise the State of Palestine
- **30 JULY:** Israel bombs Beirut, killing Hezbollah commander Fuad Shukr
- **31 JULY:** Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh assassinated in Tehran
- **6 AUG:** Yahya Sinwar takes over as Hamas leader
- **17-18 SEPT:** Pagers, walkie-talkies explode in 2 cyberattacks in Lebanon, killing 32 and injuring 3,200; Israel is likely perpetrator
- **23 SEPT:** Israeli airstrikes in Lebanon kill 569 and injure 1,835 marking deadliest day of conflict since 2006
- **27 SEPT:** Israel bombs Hezbollah headquarters in Beirut, killing its leader Hassan Nasrallah
- **1 OCT:** Iran attacks Israel with 180 missiles to avenge Nasrallah's death, sparking fears of regional wars
- **16 OCT:** Israel assassinates Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar in Rafah
- **21 NOV:** ICC issues arrest warrants against Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu for war crimes
- **26 NOV:** Netanyahu announces ceasefire deal with Hezbollah in Lebanon

RED SEA CRISIS

Houthis attack on US & UK ships sparked the Red Sea crisis, affecting global shipping. Suez Canal trade dropped 50%, and Panama Canal trade fell 32%, disrupting supply chains.

IRAN'S PRESIDENT DIES IN CHOPPER CRASH

On 20 May, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and 7 others died in a helicopter crash near Azerbaijan–Iran border. Raisi was seeking re-election, but was succeeded by Masoud Pezeshkian. On 23 Sept, Iranian MP Ahmad Bakhshayesh claimed Raisi's pager could have blasted, leading to the crash.

94 KILLED IN IRAN'S DEADLIEST BOMBING

On 3 Jan, a double bombing by ISIS in Kerman, Iran, killed 94 and injured over 250 during a memorial for Iranian military officer Qasem Soleimani. 35 were arrested, marking the deadliest bombing in Iran since 1978.

ALEXEI NAVALNY, THE MAN WHO DEFIED PUTIN, KILLED

Alexei Navalny, Russia's tallest Opposition leader and fierce critic of Vladimir Putin, died on 16 February at the "Polar Wolf" Arctic penal colony, where he was serving a 30-year sentence. The 47-year-old was allegedly poisoned.

NO END IN SIGHT FOR RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

- **FEB:** Russia's invasion of Ukraine marks its 2nd anniversary. US gives $60 billion to Ukraine
- **17 MARCH:** Vladimir Putin re-elected as Russian President for 5th term
- **AUG:** Ukraine recaptures Russia's Kursk Oblast. US and Russia exchange 26 prisoners of war, the largest since Cold War
- **OCT:** North Korea sends 10,000 soldiers to Russia
- **17 NOV:** President Joe Biden allows Ukraine to use US missiles. Kremlin warns this will lead to World War III
- **13 DEC:** Russia launches 93 missiles, 200 drones damaging Ukraine's power infra

145 KILLED IN RUSSIA'S CONCERT ATTACK

On 22 March, 4 ISIS militants opened fire and stabbed people at a music concert in Moscow. The assailants also set fire to the venue, killing 145 and injuring 551.

GOVERNMENTS THAT FELL

GERMANY

Chancellor Olaf Scholz-led govt, fell as the coalition of Social Democratic Party, Greens & Free Democratic Party lost majority after he dismissed Finance Min. He lost no confidence vote on 16 Dec. This was amid economic stagnation & disagreements over budget.

SOUTH KOREA

On 3 Dec, President Yoon Suk Yeol declared martial law, citing "anti-state forces" threats. The National Assembly voted 190-0 to lift the law within hours. This led to Yoon's impeachment on 14 December and defence minister arrests.

FRANCE

On 4 Dec, the govt led by Michel Barnier, collapsed following vote of no confidence. The crisis began when Barnier wanted to pass the 2025 budget without Parl's approval. The budget cut €40 billion in spending.

SYRIA

In December, 53 years of Al-Assad family's regime collapsed in Syria after a rebel offensive. Within two weeks, opposition force, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) led by Abu Mohammed al-Julani captured cities, including Aleppo and Damascus. On 8 December, President Bashar al-Assad fled to Moscow. Syria's economy had tanked mainly due to illicit trade in the psychoactive drug Captagon. As people struggled to survive, even Assad's soldiers abandoned him.

GEORGIA

Protests erupted in Georgia over delay in EU accession talks and allegations of fraud in October 2024 Parl polls. Protesters demanded fresh polls and an end to the govt's pro-Russian stance, which hinders Georgia's EU aspirations. At least 150 were detained.

BURKINA FASO

On 7 Dec, Burkina Faso's military leader Captain Ibrahim Traore dissolved the govt and dismissed PM Apollinaire Kyelem de Tambela. Rimtalba Jean Emmanuel Ouedraogo, an ex-minister, became the new PM. The ongoing violence has displaced 2 million.

CHAD

Chad's prez poll faced controversy as Mahamat Déby ran for re-election despite promising not to. The govt disqualified key Oppn leaders, including Succès Masra. Oppn boycotted alleging fraud, ballot stuffing and voter intimidation. Masra claimed victory but Déby was declared winner, triggering protests.

BANGLADESH

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's 15-year reign ended following a massive student-led uprising in Bangladesh. The protests, which began in July, were sparked by the government's decision to reinstate a controversial policy reserving 30% of government jobs for relatives of those who fought in the 1971 War of Independence. Protests saw 400 students die. On 5 August, Hasina quit and fled to India as people vandalised her palace. An interim government was established with Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus taking on as advisory. Elections will be held by 2025 end.

BEAR THE BULL BOOM

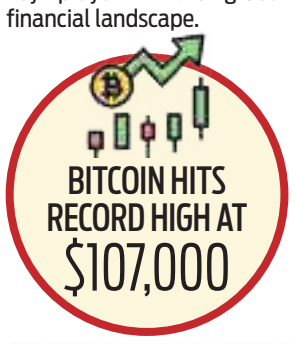
Global investors poured in Rs 7,695 crore, boosting BSE market cap to Rs 467.4 trillion. However, market saw a massive plunge following Lok Sabha results, with Sensex losing over 6,000 points and Rs 26 lakh crore in investor wealth.

SENSEX BREACHES 83,000 RECORD FOR 1ST TIME

25,389 NIFTY SURGES 1.9%, ITS HIGHEST IN JULY

BITCOIN HITS $107,000 FOR THE FIRST TIME

Bitcoin surged past $107,000 for the first time in December 2024, continuing its impressive rally. The urge is attributed to pro cryptocurrency Donald Trump's victory in US polls, strong investor sentiment, and the broader appeal of digital assets amid global economic uncertainties. However, this new high strengthens its position as a key player in the global financial landscape.



ELON VS AMBANI: THE BILLIONAIRE BROADBAND BATTLE BEGINS

Elon Musk and Mukesh Ambani lock horns over India's satellite internet market, which will provide internet anywhere within the satellite's coverage without the need for cables. This will enable high-speed internet access in rural areas where it is scarce. Billionaire Musk dreams of entering India with Starlink, while Ambani's Jio aims to dominate the broadband space. In Oct, the Centre announced that the satellite spectrum would be auctioned, which would give Ambani an edge. Musk criticised the decision, prompting the government to allocate spectrum administratively instead.

ADANI SAGA DEEPENS: FRAUD AND BRIBERY ALLEGATIONS

Adani-Hindenburg saga took a fresh turn, keeping the conglomerate under intense scrutiny. Trouble reignited after Hindenburg alleged that Adani used Kotak Mahindra Bank for its offshore entities. Instead of investigating Adani, SEBI issued a show-cause notice to Hindenburg, accusing it of targeting the conglomerate. Hindenburg struck back with explosive revelations, alleging SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch and her husband held accounts tied to Adani shell entities.

In a separate development, US Department of Justice charged Adani and 7 others in a $250 million bribery and fraud case, adding international pressure to the group. Adani Ports and SEZ Ltd announced it will fund Colombo West International Terminal project in Sri Lanka using its own resources, amidst bribery case. Kenya's President cancelled multimillion-dollar deals with Adani, including airport expansion and energy projects, though the group clarified it had not entered into any binding agreement to operate Kenya's main airport.

RUPEE SINKS TO HISTORIC LOW

The Indian Rupee approached its all-time low against the US dollar in 2024. In January, the Rupee settled at 83.11 per dollar and by December it hit its lowest at 85.50 against the US dollar. Analysts attribute the decline to concerns over a stronger dollar globally, coupled with a rise in crude oil prices and inflationary pressures in India.

BYJU'S: FROM EDTECH STAR TO LEGAL WOES

Edtech giant BYJU's, once valued at $22 billion in 2022, now faces insolvency after defaulting on a $1.2 billion loan from US creditors. The fallout led to its board voting to remove founder Byju Raveendran as CEO, reflecting a loss of trust in his leadership. Adding to its woes, BYJU's was sued by BCCI over a ₹158 crore sponsorship deal with the Indian cricket team. The Supreme Court reinstated insolvency proceedings, ordering the amount to be held in escrow. This marks a significant fall for Byju's, which also laid off 500 employees in 2024, and struggled with unpaid salaries. It continues to face legal battles, leaving its future uncertain.

INFLATION HITS 14-MONTH HIGH

India's middle class is facing financial strain as inflation reached a 14-month high, rising to 6.5% in October. Urban spending has slowed, with sales of consumer goods declining by 5-6% in the second quarter. High food inflation, particularly in vegetables and cereals, continues to burn the pockets of people. Tomatoes at one point costed ₹120 per kg in some cities, and onions at₹90 per kg.

BOEING STRIKE ENDS WITH 40% RAISE

Boeing machinists' strike began on 13 Sept after workers rejected a contract offering a 25% pay raise over 4 years. Strike ended on 4 November when workers approved a new contract offering nearly a 40% pay raise and improved benefits. Meanwhile many Boeing flights experienced snags throughout the world, raising alarm over safety. For example, Alaska Airlines Flight 1282, carrying 177 people, saw its rear door plug comeoff at 16,000 feet.

CRYPTO CHAOS: WAZIRX LOSES $230M IN BREACH

WazirX, one of India's largest cryptocurrency exchanges, suffered a major security breach, resulting in the loss of Rs 19 billion (approximately $230 million) and 45% of its total holdings. It affected 15 million investors worldwide. Hackers gained unauthorised access to accounts.

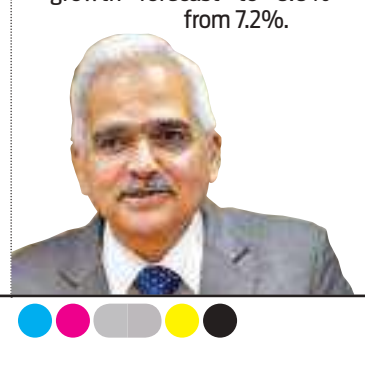
LAYOFFS

In 2024, mass layoffs surged across industries as firms faced economic uncertainty, rising costs, recession fears and AI boom. Here are biggest layoffs in India this year.

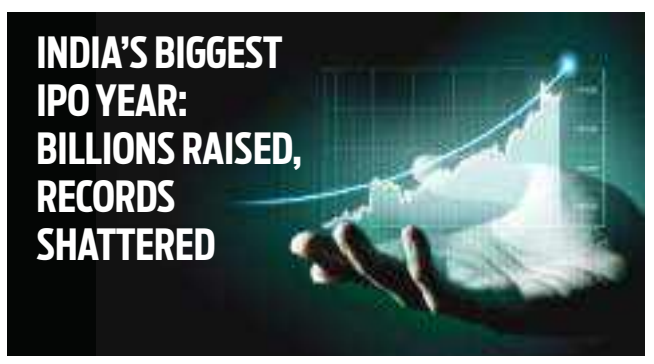
COMPANIES THAT FIRED	EMPLOYEES FIRED
Reliance	42,000
Dell	6,000
Byju's	500
Swiggy	400
PayPal	2,500
Whirlpool	1,000
Flipkart	1,100
Apple	600
Healthify	150
Amazon	27,000

RBI HOLDS REPO RATE AT 6.5% AGAIN!

RBI MPC kept the repo rate unchanged at 6.5% the 11th time. It maintained a 'neutral' stance on monetary policy. In December, it cut cash reserve ratio to 4% from 4.5%, raised inflation forecast to 4.8%, and revised GDP growth forecast to 6.6% from 7.2%.



INDIA'S BIGGEST IPO YEAR: BILLIONS RAISED, RECORDS SHATTERED



2024 has been a blockbuster year for IPOs in India, with companies smashing records and drawing massive investor attention. Hyundai Motor made history with its record-breaking ₹27,870 crore IPO — the largest in the country and the first by a carmaker in two decades.

Swiggy launched its ₹11,327 crore IPO in November, with shares priced between ₹371 and ₹390 amid 36% FY24 revenue growth to ₹11,634 crore despite a ₹2,350 crore loss.

Ola Electric's August IPO, priced at ₹72 to ₹76 per share, was highly successful, raising around ₹5,000 crore as the offering was oversubscribed by over four times. However Ola Electric was embroiled in a controversy after users flagged poor service, battery issues and failure to issue refunds.

MEGA MERGERS

VISTARA JOINS FORCES WITH AIR INDIA FOR STRONGER SKIES

After 8 years of running, Vistara announced merger with Air India on 12 November. It is valued at approximately ₹6,400 crore ($1 billion), combining their fleets into India's largest with 218 aircraft. The goal was to create a unified national carrier with a stronger presence both domestically and internationally, blending Vistara's premium services with Air India's global reach. Vistara, a joint venture between Tata Sons (51%) and Singapore Airlines (49%), saw Singapore Airlines invest ₹2,058 crore ($250 million) to acquire a 25.1% stake in the merged entity. The merger, announced in November 2022, concluded with Vistara ceasing operations in March 2024.

ZEE, SONY END MERGER DRAMA

The highly anticipated merger between Zee Entertainment Enterprises and Sony Pictures Networks India collapsed in 2024, ending a two-year effort to create a $10 billion media giant. The merger promised to combine Sony's global strength with Zee's local dominance, but it fell apart due to regulatory hurdles, financial concerns, and governance issues. Shareholders raised red flags over Zee's financial health and past mismanagement. In August, both companies settled disputes amicably, withdrawing legal claims and clearing the path for independent growth.

AVENUE SUPERMARTS BUYS 26% OF FP AMPERE

Avenue Supermarts Limited, the operator of the D-Mart retail chain, has acquired a 26% stake in FP Ampere Energy Private Limited (FPAEPL) for Rs 1.99 crore. The acquisition, approved by the company's Board of Directors, took place on 26 October, 2024. The transaction is expected to be finalised by 31 December, 2024.

STREAMING POWERHOUSES: JIO & DISNEY HOTSTAR UNITE

Reliance Jio and Disney Hotstar have completed their ₹70,352 crore merger, forming a powerful partnership and being the biggest platform for OTT streamings. The new platform, JioStar.com, combines Jio's reach with Disney Star's premium content, aiming to dominate India's OTT market with movies, sports, and entertainment. It will hold exclusive streaming rights for cricket and major sports. The joint venture ownership is divided among three major stakeholders: Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) holds a 16.34% stake, Disney owns 36.84%, and Viacom18 has the largest share at 46.82%. Nita Ambani will lead the platform, reshaping India's digital entertainment landscape. Two teens from Dubai reportedly purchased the domain JioHotstar.com ahead of the announcement, but later gave it up.

DRIVING TOGETHER: HONDA & NISSAN EYE TOP SPOT WITH $191B PLAN

Honda and Nissan have officially signed an MoU to explore a merger, aiming to create world's third-largest auto group by sales, behind Toyota and Volkswagen. Targeting combined sales of $191 billion and a $21 billion operating profit, they will finalise talks by June 2025.

BIG BETS

ULTRATECH BUYS ₹8,000 CR STAKE IN INDIA CEMENTS

Ultratech Cement, part of Aditya Birla Group, has acquired a 24.5% stake in India Cements for Rs 8,000 crore in June, to strengthen its presence in South India amid competition from Adani Group, which recently bought Orient Cement and Peena Cement.

The purchase will make Birla Group, second largest shareholder in India Cements, with the founders of India Cement owning 28.5% currently. Adani, now second-largest player, plans to acquire Orient Cement, targeting 100 MT annual capacity by FY25.

POONAWALLA-JOHAR'S ₹1,000 CR MOVE

Adar Poonawalla, CEO of Serum Institute, acquired a 50% stake in Karan Johar's Dharma Productions for ₹1,000 crore in October. While Johar remains at the creative helm, Poonawalla's investment brings fresh funds . In FY23, revenue surged fourfold to ₹1,040 crore, while net profit fell 59% to Rs 11 crore due to soaring expenses.

Cannes to concerts: India surfs global wave

From 'All We Imagine as Light' stealing the spotlight to Diljit's even higher rise to fame, 2024 was packed with entertainment

'Pushpa 2' breaks record & courts trouble

Allu Arjun's 'Pushpa 2' dominated 2024 as the most-watched Indian film, raking in Rs 1,500 crore revenue. But the triumph quickly soured when Arjun's visit to Hyderabad's Sandhya Theatre for the premiere triggered a stampede, killing a woman and leaving her son injured. Arjun was arrested and released within 4 hours, and later grilled by the cops, who released videos showing the actor continuing to watch the film despite being told about the death outside the threatre.

Bollywood reminisces timeless hits with re-releases

As new releases failed to strike a chord, crowd favourites were re-released in theatres. Moviegoers rushed to watch old favourites such as 'Yeh Jawani Hai Dewani', 'Rockstar', 'Tumbbad', 'Kal Ho Naa Ho', 'Laila Majnu', 'Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge' and 'Sholay'. South Indian hits such as Kamal Haasan's 'Indian' and Chiranjeevi's 'Indra' also made a triumphant return.

The year of concerts

2024 has been a treat for India's music lovers, with international artistes such as Jonas Brothers, Sting, Maroon 5, Bryan Adams, Dua Lipa, and Punjabi star Diljit Dosanjh gracing the stage for a series of concerts. Coldplay's 'Music of the Spheres World Tour' is coming to Mumbai in Jan, while Ed Sheeran will embark on a seven-city 'Mathematics' tour in February. Mr Big is also returning after 15 years in Feb. Meanwhile, BookMyShow found itself in hot water after Coldplay tickets were being sold on black market sites for over Rs 1 lakh.

Diddy goes to jail for rapes

Hollywood saw its biggest sex scandal with US rapper and music producer Sean Diddy Combs's arrest on 16 Sept. He faces at least 300 cases of rape, prostitution and sex trafficking dating back to 1990s. Cops raided his LA mansion in March and seized drugs and 1,000 bottles of baby oils – allegedly laced with drugs - that were to be used in orgies known as "freak offs". His lavish parties were attended by almost all A-list Hollywood celebs such as Oprah, Leonardo Di Caprio, Jennifer Lopez, Aston Kutcher, JayZ and Beyonce. People allege that Justin Beiber is one of Diddy's many victims, which could run up to thousands. Jay-Z too was accused of raping a 13-year-old girl in 2000 while Diddy watched.

'All We Imagine as Light' shines bright

Payal Kapadia's debut film 'All We Imagine as Light' premiered at the 77th Cannes Film Festival on 23 May, making history as the first Indian film in the main competition since 1994, and winning the Grand Prix. The movie follows three women who bond as outsiders in a city. It earned Golden Globe nominations for Best Motion Picture – Non-English Language and Best Director, plus a Critics' Choice nod for Best Foreign Language Film.

Ambanis' big fat Indian wedding

The Ambanis took the "big fat wedding" to new heights with their son Anant marrying Radhika Merchant in a 5-month celebration costing Rs 5,000 crore. Anybody scrolling online was left entertained for months with celebrities performing at the events, including A listers such as Rihanna, Justin Bieber and John Cena. Even Kim and Khloe Kardashian and Mark Zuckerberg made an appearance, and so did our PM.

Diljit serves in 2024

Punjabi singer Diljit Dosanjh made waves in pop culture as he dazzled on 'The Tonight Show' with Jimmy Fallon. In March, he joined Ed Sheeran on stage in Mumbai. Dosanjh made history with 'Dil-Luminati' concert as the 1st Punjabi artiste to headline Vancouver and Toronto's Rogers Centre. Even Canadian PM Justin Trudeau joined him on stage. He found himself at the centre of a row after Telangana issued a notice warning him against promoting drugs & alcohol. Maharashtra cancelled alcohol sales permit for his Pune concert. Diljit hit back, stating he would stop singing about alcohol if India goes dry. Bajrang Dal protested ahead of his Indore concert, over meat at the event. Diljit defied the Right-wing group by saying "Kisi Ke Baap Ka Hindustaan Thodi Hai".

It's Swift's world and we're just living in it!

Taylor Swift's 'Eras Tour' became the highest-grossing music tour in history, earning $2 billion from 5.2 million tickets. The tour boosted economies in Los Angeles, Chicago, and London. Swift gave her staff $197 million in bonuses. In March, controversy arose over Singapore's claim that Swift would only perform there, with Thailand's ex-PM alleging $2-3 million subsidies per show. On 29 July, a stabbing spree at a Swift-themed dance class in England killed three girls, sparking Far-Right riots. Some 300 cops were injured and 1,200 were arrested.

Nancy walks the talk

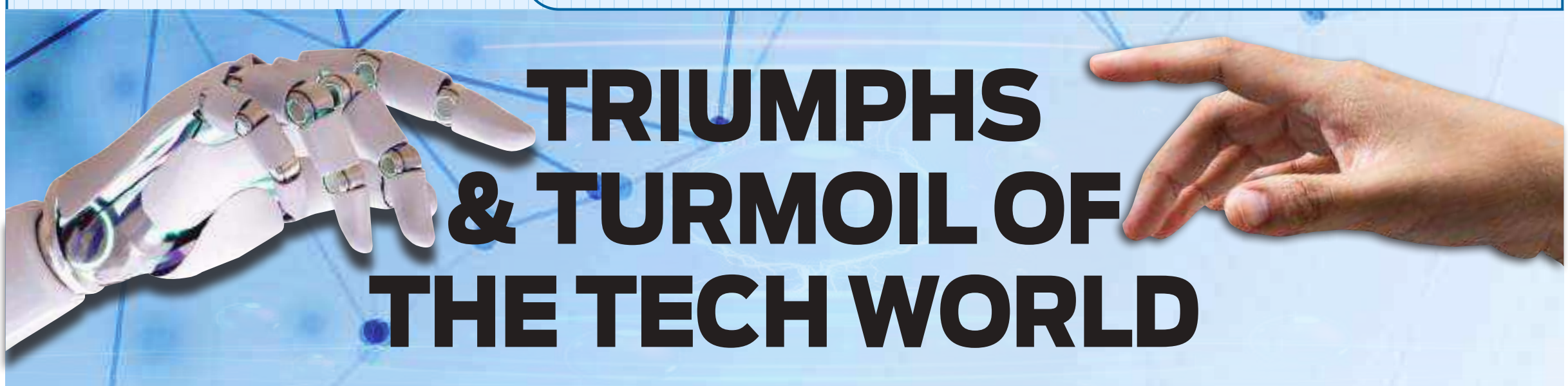
Fashion influencer Nancy Tyagi, 23, rose to fame when she walked the Cannes red carpet. A self-taught fashion designer from Uttar Pradesh – now based in Delhi - she made history as India's first self-taught designer, model and stylist to grace the Cannes. Tyagi's stunning DIY dresses adorned celebrities such as Nita Ambani and Ananya Pandey. She secured the number one spot on Forbes India's Top 100 Digital Stars 2024 list.

Vir Das makes history at Emmy's

Actor and comedian Vir Das made history as the first Indian to host the Emmy Awards. Das' witty monologue poked fun at the infamous Oscars slap, leaving everyone in stitches.

The rise of Hanumankind

Sooraj Cherukat aka Hanumankind witnessed a meteoric rise to fame in 2024 after the release of 'Big Dawgs', which has over 180 million views on YouTube. It displaced Kendrick Lamar's 'Not Like Us' from the top spot on Spotify Global Top 50. The Kerala-born rapper will perform at California's annual music festival Coachella next year.



TRIUMPHS & TURMOIL OF THE TECH WORLD

From global outages to AI controversies, 2024 saw many innovations & even more challenges for tech giants

GOOGLE'S WILLOW WONDER

In Dec, Google unveiled Willow, a quantum chip that can solve computations in under five minutes — tasks that would take today's supercomputers 10 septillion (10^{24}) years. Cracking a 30-year research, Willow could enhance weather monitoring Following the announcement, Google's parent company Alphabet's stock rose by 7.27%. However, experts warned that Willow could crack security codes, raising concerns about digital safety.

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Your PC ran into a problem and needs to restart. We're just collecting some error info, and then we'll restart for you.
20% complete

MICROSOFT OUTAGE BRINGS WORLD TO A HALT

On 19 July, around 8.5 million computers shutdown worldwide, which disrupted businesses and threw airports, railways, government services, banks, stock exchanges, telecoms, health systems and media into a tizzy. Cybersecurity company CrowdStrike caused the massive outage as its software reportedly contained a bug that caused disruptions when it went into an update. Founded in 2011, Texas-based CrowdStrike said it was not a cyberattack. They lost ₹75,300 crore in the market.

ISRO TOUCHES NEW HEIGHTS »

ISRO undertook two significant missions in 2024. On 1 Jan, the PSLV-C58 rocket launched XPOSAT, India's first dedicated space observatory for studying the polarisation of cosmic X-rays. The mission aims to investigate the dynamics of extreme celestial objects such as pulsars, black holes, and active galactic nuclei. On 17 Feb, ISRO launched INSAT-3DS, a meteorological satellite that provides essential services to India and its neighbours, including communication, television broadcasting, meteorology, and search and rescue operations. Looking ahead to 2025, ISRO plans to launch NISAR (NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar), a joint mission with NASA, which will deploy a dual-frequency radar imaging satellite.

THE DEEPFAKE TROUBLE

As 2024 elections approached, the misuse of deepfakes spread misinformation. Videos allegedly featuring Ranveer Singh and Aamir Khan endorsing parties went viral but were debunked as deepfakes. In January, a deepfake video of Sachin Tendulkar supposedly endorsing an online gaming platform, claiming his daughter earned Rs 1.8 lakh per day, was clarified by him as fake. One of the most viral and talked-about AI-generated videos of the year featured Prime Minister Narendra Modi, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, and Rahul Gandhi shaking a leg.

WORLD GETS 1ST LAW TO REIN IN AI

On 13 March, European Union passed Artificial Intelligence Act, the world's first comprehensive AI regulatory framework. It classifies AI by risk, from "unacceptable" (banned) to high, medium, and low. Concerns grow over AI's potential abuse, especially deepfakes influencing elections, amid growing investment from companies such as Microsoft, Amazon and Nvidia.

TECH GIANTS UNDER EU SCRUTINY

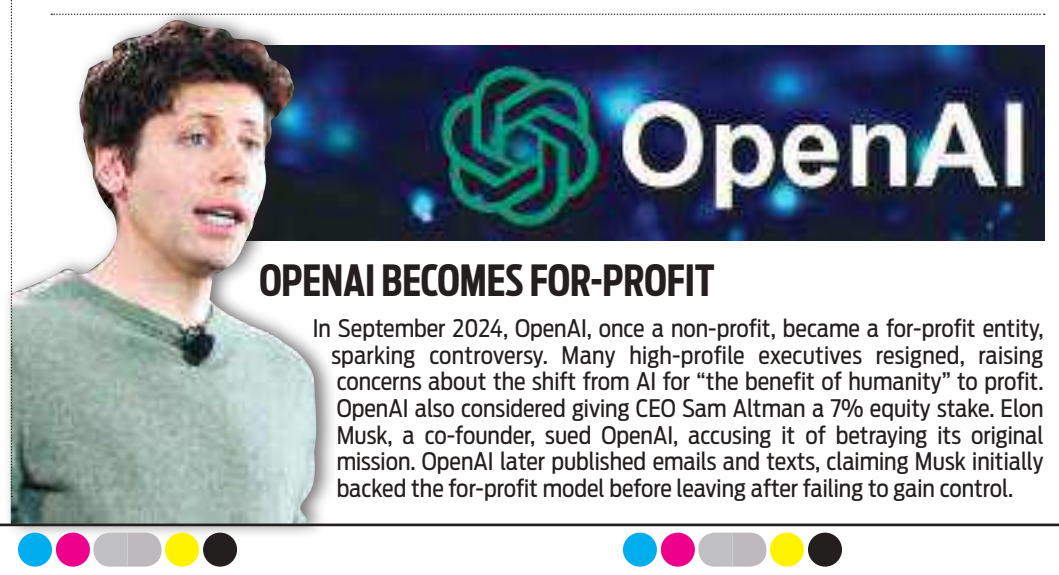
European Union imposed heavy fines for data breaches and antitrust violations. In March, EU launched a probe into Apple for violating Digital Markets Act. Apple was fined €1.8 billion for breaching competition laws over music streaming. In September, EU ordered Apple to pay €13 billion in taxes to Ireland. Google also faced scrutiny with EU upholding a €2.42 billion fine for abusing its dominant position in shopping search results. Meanwhile, Meta was fined €800 million for abusive practices with its marketplace ads, and in November €251 million for a personal data breach. In the US, lawmakers pushed for Alphabet to sell its Chrome browser, and in India, Competition Commission accused Apple of abusing its App Store dominance.

STUCK IN SPACE

In a growing trouble for Boeing, NASA astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore are stranded aboard the International Space Station (ISS) since June after the Boeing Starliner capsule they were using for the mission suffered propulsion system malfunctions and helium leaks, forcing it to return to Earth without them. What was planned as a seven-day mission has now extended into months. Although a SpaceX capsule launched in October, their return is not scheduled until March 2025.

BRAZIL BANS X

On 30 Aug, Brazil's Supreme Court banned Elon Musk's X after it refused to shut down profiles spreading misinformation about the 2022 Brazilian Presidential election. Despite the court's order, Musk, a self-declared free-speech advocate, declined to comply. The court then imposed the ban, but Musk reversed his stance, paying a $5 million fine, lifting the ban. Later, Musk fired Brazilian staff and closed X's office in Brazil, which has 22 million users.



OPENAI BECOMES FOR-PROFIT

In September 2024, OpenAI, once a non-profit, became a for-profit entity, sparking controversy. Many high-profile executives resigned, raising concerns about the shift from AI for "the benefit of humanity" to profit. OpenAI also considered giving CEO Sam Altman a 7% equity stake. Elon Musk, a co-founder, sued OpenAI, accusing it of betraying its original mission. OpenAI later published emails and texts, claiming Musk initially backed the for-profit model before leaving after failing to gain control.

A CHIP IN THE BRAIN

On 31 Jan, Elon Musk's neurotechnology company Neuralink implanted the first-ever brain chip 'Telepathy' in a human. Designed to aid neurological disorders such as epilepsy and ALS, the implant records brain signals and controls devices such as a computer cursor. Each surgery costs $10,500.

STRUGGLES, SURPRISES & SUCCESS

India get 6 Olympic, 29 Paralympic medals

France's Paris hosted the 2024 edition of Olympics and the total cost was around $9 billion (Rs 76,000 crore). The United States topped the medal table for the fourth consecutive time, with 40 Gold and 126 total medals. India's medal tally at Paris 2024 dropped to six — one Silver and five Bronze — down from seven at Tokyo 2020. Medals came from Neeraj Chopra, Manu Bhaker, Sarabjot Singh, Swapnil Kusale, Aman Sehrawat, and the Indian hockey team, placing India 71st overall. Near misses, including Lakshya Sen (badminton), Mirabai Chanu (weightlifting), and Vinesh Phogat's disqualification (wrestling), marked the campaign. In contrast, the Paralympics brought a record 29 medals — 7 Gold, 9 Silver and 13 Bronze — placing India 18th on the medals tally.

India achieved their most successful performance in Paralympics at Paris, securing a total of 29 medals, surpassing the 19-medal haul from Tokyo 2020

WRESTLERS' PROTEST SPURS CHARGES AGAINST WFI CHIEF

In January 2023, wrestlers including Vinesh Phogat, Sakshi Malik and Bajrang Punia organised a sit-in demanding disbanding of Wrestling Federation of India due to alleged sexual harassment of female wrestlers by its chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh. On 20 May this year, a Delhi court framed charges of sexual harassment, intimidation and

SUNIL CHHETRI BIDS FAREWELL AFTER 2 DECADES OF GLORY

Sunil Chhetri, India's most decorated footballer, retired from international football on 6 June, closing a career spanning over two decades. Chhetri enjoyed remarkable success with Bengaluru FC, winning I-League, ISL and Super Cup. On international stage, Chhetri led the team to victory in Nehru Cup and SAFF Championship.

NEW ERA AT BALLON D'OR: RODRI & BONMATÍ STEAL THE SHOW

For the first time since 2003, neither Lionel Messi — an eight-time winner — nor Cristiano Ronaldo, a five-time winner, were nominated for the Ballon d'Or. This year, Rodri, the 28-year-old Manchester City midfielder who played a key role in securing a record fourth consecutive Premier League title, claimed the award. In the women's category, Aitana Bonmatí, 26, of Barcelona won the Women's Ballon d'Or for the second consecutive year. Meanwhile, Carlo Ancelotti was named Men's Coach of the Year, and Real Madrid were honored as Men's Club of the Year.

ANWAR ALI SUSPENDED IN CONTRACT DISPUTE

A key figure for both India and East Bengal defence, Anwar Ali got a four-month suspension by AIFF's Players' Status Committee for wrongful contract termination with Mohun Bagan. In addition to the ban, East Bengal, Delhi FC (his parent club), and the player himself have been ordered to pay a record compensation of Rs 12.9 crore to Mohun Bagan. Delhi High Court criticised AIFF's decision-making and later Ali got an NOC to play for East Bengal.

PAKISTAN TO HOST CHAMPIONS TROPHY UNDER HYBRID MODEL

Pakistan, which hasn't hosted any global tournament since the 2009 attack on Sri Lankan team, was gearing up to host Champions Trophy 2025. But due to pressure from ICC, read BCCI, Pakistan agreed to host the cricket tournament on hybrid model. As per the agreement between ICC and PCB, Pakistan will not travel to India for their matches, and India won't travel to Pakistan for their matches.

JAY SHAH MAKES HISTORY AS ICC CHIEF AT AGE 36

A day after stepping down as the Secretary of BCCI, Jay Shah was appointed Chairperson of ICC on 1 December. Shah at just 36 years old becomes the youngest-ever and fifth Indian to lead ICC. In his place, Devajit Saikia, a former first-class cricketer from Assam, was named BCCI Secretary.

IPL 2025 AUCTION: 12-YR-OLD VAIBHAV IS STAR OF THE SHOW

IPL 2025 auction made headlines as 12-year-old Vaibhav Suryavanshi, a talented southpaw from Bihar, became the youngest player ever to be shortlisted. Rajasthan Royals grabbed him for Rs 1.1 crore. The auction also witnessed history as Lucknow Super Giants acquired Rishabh Pant for Rs 27 crore, the highest price ever paid for a player.

JAKE PAUL DEFEATS MIKE TYSON IN BLOCKBUSTER BOXING MATCH

Around 65 million people watched the professional boxing match between YouTuber-turned-professional boxer Jake Paul and former undisputed heavyweight world champion Mike Tyson on Netflix. The bout took place on 15 November in Texas, Paul defeated Tyson via unanimous decision.

BIG CHANGES AHEAD FOR FERRARI AND FORMULA 1 IN 2025

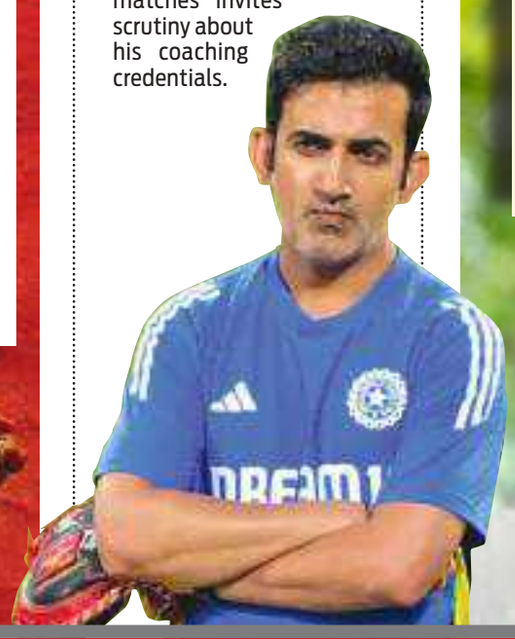
In a surprising move, Ferrari Chairman John Elkann announced that Lewis Hamilton would replace Carlos Sainz for 2025 season. Meanwhile, in the 2024 season, Max Verstappen secured his fourth consecutive Drivers' Championship title and McLaren claimed their ninth Constructors' Championship title.

KING OF CLAY BOWS OUT OF TENNIS ROYALTY

Rafael Nadal, the 22-time Grand Slam champion and legendary "King of Clay", retired from tennis on 19 November. Nadal's dominance at the French Open is unparalleled, winning the singles title a record 14 times. Beyond Paris, Nadal claimed four US Open titles, triumphed twice each at Wimbledon and the Australian Open, and earned Olympic Gold in both singles and doubles. Nadal, alongside Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer, formed the iconic "Big Three" that ruled men's tennis from the early 2000s, marking an unforgettable era in the sport.

Gautam Gambhir gets shaky start to coaching

A prolific batsman, Gautam Gambhir was named head coach of India cricket team this year after he quit politics following serving as Lok Sabha MP from Delhi. Gambhir had a poor start as India lost to New Zealand in their 1st home Test series defeat since 2012 and also to Sri Lanka in ODIs, but the solace came in victory against Bangladesh in Test and T20s. In Border-Gavaskar Trophy, except the first test, the performance of cricketers in the following matches invites scrutiny about his coaching credentials.



PRAGGNANANDHAA SHINES WITH HISTORIC WINS

R Praggnanandhaa, 19, had an impressive 2024, finishing 5th out of 8 participants in the highly competitive Candidates Tournament — a major step towards qualifying for the World Chess Championship. Later, at the Norway Chess Tournament, he made history by defeating Magnus Carlsen for the first time in a classical, over-the-board match. India's chess scene was filled with victories. The Indian Open and Women's teams both clinched Gold at the 45th Chess Olympiad in Hungary.

THEY CALLED IT A DAY

ROHAN BOPANNA
Indian tennis player

DINESH KARTHIK
Indian wicketkeeper-batter (all forms of cricket)

SHELLY-ANN FRASER-PRYCE
Jamaican sprinter

RAVICHANDRAN ASHWIN
Indian spinner (all forms of cricket)

RAVINDRA JADEJA, VIRAT KOHLI & ROHIT SHARMA
Indian cricketers (T20 cricket)

TONI KROOS
German footballer

DIPA KARMAKAR
Indian gymnast

JAMES ANDERSON
England fast bowler (Test cricket)

PR SREEJESH
Indian hockey keeper

SHIKHAR DHAWAN
Indian former cricketer

RANI RAMPAL
Indian hockey player

CONTROVERSIES

Vinesh Phogat: From disqualification to political victory

Wrestler Vinesh Phogat switched from her 53kg category to 50kg in Paris Olympics. She beat defending champion Yui Susaki in 1st round. As she was overweight ahead of the final, she cut her hair, exercised and drew blood. But she was disqualified for weighing 100g over the limit. Phogat then retired from sports, and won in Haryana Assembly elections on Congress ticket.

Bajrang Punia suspended, joins politics

Bajrang Punia, a Tokyo Olympics Bronze medallist, was suspended by NADA in April after he refused to provide a urine sample for a dope test during 2024 Olympic qualifiers selection trials. On 7 September, he joined Congress and was appointed the head of All India Kisan Congress.

Breakdancing debuts at Paris Olympics with mixed reactions

Breakdancing made its Olympic debut at Paris, but its inclusion invited a wave of criticism. Many do not acknowledge breaking as a real sport, but as an art form instead. One performer who caught the spotlight — but not for the right reasons — was Australian breakdancer Rachael 'Raygun' Gunn for her unconventional moves. She later retired due to the backlash.

KL Rahul and LSG part ways after viral post-match video

A heated post-match discussion between LSG owner Sanjiv Goenka and captain KL Rahul following their 10-wicket loss to Sunrisers Hyderabad in IPL 2024 sparked a storm on social media. The viral video fuelled speculation that it played a role in Rahul's departure from Lucknow Super Giants ahead of the IPL 2025 mega auction. In the auction, KL Rahul emerged as one of the marquee players, with Delhi Capitals securing his services for a hefty ₹14 crore.

Imane Khelif's punch triggers gender debate

One of the biggest controversies at Paris Olympics erupted when Imane Khelif of Algeria delivered a punch that forced Italy's Angela Carrini to withdraw from match 1 minute after opening bell. Khelif, who was banned from women's boxing after failing a gender test, went on to win Gold. A leaked medical report revealed that Khelif was a "biological male".

Pandya's IPL 2024: From hero to villain with Mumbai Indians

After leading Gujarat Titans to the IPL 2022 title, Hardik Pandya made a high-profile move to Mumbai Indians in 2024. However, when he replaced Rohit Sharma as captain, it sparked a wave of anger among Mumbai fans. Pandya was booed from the crowd during several matches, and the team's struggles continued, with MI finishing at the bottom of the points table.